





February





## SPEAKING OF ANGELS

*Other books by Father McAstocker:*

ONCE UPON A TIME

MY AIN LADDIE

FLASHLIGHTS

A FRIEND OF MINE

HIMSELF

HERSELF

THE CARPENTER

THE JOY OF SORROW

THE CONSOLER

LITTLE VIRTUES



# Speaking of Angels

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DAVID P. McASTOCKER, S.J.

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THE BRUCE PUBLISHING COMPANY  
*Milwaukee*

*Reumann*  
*1.80*

Imprimi potest: LEOPOLDUS J. ROBINSON, S.J., Praep. Prov. Oregoniensis  
Nihil obstat: JOHN A. SCHULIEN, S.T.D., Censor librorum  
Imprimatur: ✠ MOYSES E. KILEY, Archiepiscopus Milwaukiensis  
6 Martii, 1946

BT 966  
M17

202561

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The Bruce Publishing Co.

Printed in the United States of America



TO  
THE GRAND SHEPHERD OF THE NORTH,  
THE MOST REVEREND  
BISHOP RAPHAEL J. CREMONT, S.J., D.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Father Michael Stack of the Monterey Fresno Diocese, to Father Richard A. Gleason, S.J., to Father Cornelius F. Deeney, S.J., and to the other dear friends who aided me in writing this book.



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## Chapter I

### THE BATTLEFIELD

Man, left to his own resources, easily falls a prey to deception and falsehood. The past two or three decades have witnessed an unparalleled multiplication of pitfalls and deceits. Not only individuals are led astray, but entire nations are swayed this way and that way, just as the multitudinous heads of wheat bow before capricious breezes on a summer day. A minister of propaganda does the thinking for the masses; and his dicta are not measured according to the standards of honesty and truth but solely by the Machiavellian tactics of the dictator who pays his salary.

As Christian men and women, we recognize the monstrous increase in crimes of almost every description but, at the same time, we are puzzled and confused. The ramifications of these excesses are so many and extend so far afield that we are unnerved, or unable to strike the evil at its root.

Our inability to apply a remedy usually comes from the fact that there are too many bottles in our medicine cabinet and we are, as a consequence, in doubt as to which antidote should be given.

In this world-wide confusion and unrest, it becomes in-

creasingly important to diagnose the malady correctly and to apply a competent and adequate remedy. About twenty years ago, the late Gilbert Keith Chesterton wrote a volume on "tremendous trifles." Similarly, the subject matter on hand remains — notwithstanding the scoffings of satirists and slanderers — a tremendous trifle, a truly important item in solving the problem which confronts each individual today.

### 1. WHY WE ARE DECEIVED

To begin, let us consider deception from a positive constructive angle; from the viewpoint of Christ.

St. Paul admonishes us to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> What does he mean? Well, the chief acts of the mind are to reason and to judge. St. Paul would have us judge as valuable those things which Christ considers as valuable; and to count as of little worth those matters upon which Christ sets small value. Moreover, he would have us keep our minds as free from error and deception as Christ's mind is. This is, indeed, a high mark at which to aim, since Christ's human mind never is deceived.

Again, as Father Faber tells us, there is never a silence in our souls. We are continually striving, either toward the stars or toward the abyss. Very well. Suppose, then, that the trend is upward; suppose we have just elicited a well-known aspiration, "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine."

What happens? Well, the chief act of the heart (or more accurately, of our free will) is to desire. We cherish the longing that, just as He is meek and humble in heart, so,

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. 2:5.

too, He will conform our desires to His. This is just another way of repeating that we should consider the happenings about us as Christ considers them. We cannot gain heaven unless by our free will, co-operating with grace; in other words, we cannot gain heaven unless by our desires, co-operating with grace.

Here, then, is the goal we should strive to attain. But, in order to realize more fully this dream of ours, certain precautions are to be taken. One of these is mentioned in St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, wherein he counsels them (and the entire human race besides) to be watchful "that no man may deceive you by loftiness of words."<sup>2</sup>

One has but to scan the face of the globe today in order to be convinced of the colossal deceptions everywhere practiced; one has but to glance over newspapers and magazines to be assured of the truthfulness of a saying once uttered by a great saint: "Only on the last day will men realize how terribly they have been deceived." Let us come down to particulars. How are men deluded? The answer is obvious: in not understanding the true philosophy of life; in the false judgments their minds make on the value of things. Rarely are our minds like Christ's. We hold in high esteem that which actually is of little account, and we consider of no value that which is inestimably precious.

Human beings are tricked in devious ways. They prefer the temporal and ephemeral to the eternal, the flashy and colorful to the solidly real, the subjective to the objective. And who are the deceivers? Thousands upon thousands of teachers who, under a false cloak of culture and science, spread abroad all kinds of false philosophy. Journalists and

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<sup>2</sup> Col. 2:4.

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magazine writers who use the printed page to spread false ideas among their readers. Dramatists and script writers who use the stage and the screen for the propagation of scurrilous and lascivious notions. Men and women of various ages and positions in life — all marching, either consciously or unconsciously, under the aegis and impulse of that archdeceiver, Satan.

There is One who calls Himself the Truth. This same One calls another: "the untruth, a liar, the deceiver from the beginning." This truth is confirmed by the practice of the Catholic Church. After every low Mass, priest and people pray lest they be led astray. "Holy Michael, the Archangel, be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. . . ." These two words reveal the evil one as he truly is: thoroughly vicious and unscrupulous and, into the bargain, crafty and cunning. For snares are meant to deceive as well as to harm.

It is estimated that there are more than 350,000 priests in the world today. This would mean that approximately 350,000 times every day millions of people pray earnestly and in unison to be guarded from the enemy of our souls — "And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the divine power, drive into hell Satan and the other evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the destruction of souls." So to deceive our minds and impel our wills as to bring about the eternal ruin of our souls is the devil's specialty.

It is customary for pulpit orators to speak about the prevalence of divorce in America; to declaim against the increase in suicides; and, in particular, to decry the rapid spread of crimes that are contrary to nature. Such verbal castigations undoubtedly do great good, but they do not



effectively stem the evil because they do not strike at the source of it.

To explain: There are certain principles, widely diffused in the world today, which especially aid the fallen angels in deluding us. The entire philosophy of spiritism, for example, is bound up with the doctrine that every desire we may have is always morally good.

Nor is this false belief now confined to spiritists. Many an egoistic teacher, unscrupulously taking advantage of his position of authority, has taught the selfsame falsehood. A prominent dean of Columbia University speaks in this way to his students: "An act, whether a desire or an external action, is morally right if it results in satisfaction to the doer." Freud, of course, is even worse. He tells us that "every desire is morally good, and the only wrong or sin there can be is to suppress any such desire."

We are even justified in claiming that hardly any modern philosophy of teaching is true to Christ. Even as little children we are craftily led astray. Obedience and respect for authority are deftly relegated to the background; while the Montessori and other such systems are brought to our notice and we are taught the false principles of "self-expression."

As we grow older, this fundamental error is more firmly embedded in our minds by an elective system in education catering to subjects which require little or no mental effort. Small wonder, then, that, instead of turning out thoroughly cultured and thoroughly Christian men and women, we are sending into the world a progeny of conceited individualists who are laws unto themselves, and have no regard for the rights of God or neighbor.

If such a philosophy be correct, then Christ's philosophy

of life looks, indeed, very stupid. The Ten Commandments expressly tell us that we are not to covet or desire certain things. These self-styled doctors in Israel teach just the opposite: they say, "Go ahead! Desire and covet anything that appeals to you, and do not forget: every desire is morally good."

Christ, in speaking to the whole human family, once remarked: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."<sup>3</sup> And these words signify that, in not being the Saviour's disciple, one actually loses his soul. But what does it connote to deny yourself? Does it possibly mean to deny one's age, name, nationality? By no means: You are a human being, not because you have a name, or because you are of such an age, or of this nationality rather than that, but because you have an intellect and free will. The only object you can (and should) deny yourself is the one thing in your whole being that is free: the desires, namely, of the will.

It is in this respect that our Divine Saviour's example is most inspiring and most useful to us. He shows us clearly that personality is much more than a pleasing countenance and winning ways. Personality is based upon our rational nature — upon the solid fact that man knows himself, can control himself, and realizes fully that he is a responsible being.

In the character of Jesus, this trait of self-possession and self-denial is everywhere in evidence. The Scriptures, from His birth to His ascension, dwell upon it. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, 'Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not: but a body thou hast fitted to me: Holocausts for sin did not please thee.' Then said

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<sup>3</sup> Matt. 16:24.



I: 'Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do thy will, O God' "<sup>4</sup> — "For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just"<sup>5</sup> — "Jesus, therefore, said to Peter: 'Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' "<sup>6</sup> These, and many other passages, prove the contention of St. Paul, that "Christ did not please Himself," but went against the cravings of the natural man.

## 2. WHENCE OUR DESIRES?

But, you will ask, have the evil angels any influence over us? Have Christ and the good angels an intimate power over the desires of our will?

There was a man in the sixteenth century who wrote little, and yet he is acknowledged as a very great and practical psychologist. An unbiased historian probably would consider him as an eminent psychiatrist, and indeed he was just that. From an exhaustive study of his own emotions and desires, he wrote a clear, brief, and simple analysis on the workings of the human heart. St. Ignatius approaches his subject in a quiet, logical frame of mind, apprehending at once the importance of distinguishing correctly between the good and the evil spirit, between right and wrong. He says that these impulses and desires may originate from our own faculties of mind and will, or they may come (to use his own expression) "from without." He rightly assumes, without needing proof, that we can be conscious of this motion (or impulse) as not being our own, coming "from without."

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<sup>4</sup> Heb. 10:5.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 5:19.

<sup>6</sup> John 18:11.

"If these impulses come from without," he says, "they come either from the fallen angels or from the good angels, or from Christ."

Now first, in regard to those from the good angels or Christ: The penny catechism teaches the same doctrine as St. Ignatius when it asks the question, "What is grace?" "Actual grace is that help from God which enlightens our mind and moves our will to shun evil and do good." It is, therefore, a light to the mind, a flash, a thought — a new thought, perhaps; and to the will, it is an impulse or a desire. Hence, the practical point for Catholics to remember is that every time we receive sanctifying grace (or an increase of sanctifying grace) there is placed at our disposal dozens or hundreds of these actual graces, and such impulses and lights are given to us as we need them, in order to aid us in the struggle for salvation.

Now, the little catechism could have asked a parallel question and could have given a parallel answer, but it does not. The other question would be something like this: "What is temptation?" The answer would be: "A temptation is that help from the fallen angels which enlightens our minds and moves our will to shun evil and do good." In this case, however, the evil here shunned is really not an evil. It would be the sensitive or sensible inconvenience; and the good done would be a sinful pleasure.

In other words, what might be called a physical basis of actual grace is the physical basis of every temptation: a light to the mind and an impulse to our desires from without.

It may aid us to understand the subject more fully if we focus our attention on a small part of the globe, but one quite well known to us: our own beloved land, the



United States. We have here a vast multitude of more than a hundred million people. Since comparatively few of them are baptized, the others are without the actual graces every baptized person receives. Moreover, fewer still have the actual sacramental graces which come to us through Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Penance. When you add to this somber picture the fact that thousands upon thousands have been falsely taught that it is the part of an educated man to know that every desire, no matter how sinful, is morally right — then we must rightly conclude that Jesus Christ hardly has a chance to work on their souls, and that the fallen angels are very busy and — very successful.

### 3. DECEITS OF THE DEVIL

There is an old Latin adage which has a great deal of honesty in it — and some falsehood, too. The adage reminds us that we may learn from our mistakes. Very true. The man who falls into a pit on a dark night will, if he is wise, take care that he does not fall into the same pit again.

There is, however, a distortion given the adage. A persistent notion prevails that one must, of necessity, commit an error in order eventually to rectify it; that wrong may be done in the hope that good may come of it. It is, therefore, the part of prudence to study carefully the trickeries and deceits of the evil one lest his sophistries succeed with us. Each day's newspapers abound in heinous crimes against God and neighbor. The great number of these robberies, murders, and suicides bring home to us the stupendous activity of the devil. On all



sides we are aware of his diabolical presence; for, usually, he leaves some hellish telltale evidence behind.

Let us select a few notable cases which have happened in the not too distant past, wherein we may perceive Satan's intense hatred of souls; and the excruciating pains of body and mind which he inflicts on his victims.

In March, 1931, a wealthy man by the name of Winship committed suicide in San Francisco by shooting himself. The next day newspapers printed a note he had left behind to relatives and friends. It read as follows: "Please forgive me for the thing I am about to do, for it is the lesser of two evils that have been forced upon me. Mad impulses came over me to take two or more lives. Each recurring impulse is stronger than the predecessor and I know if I continue to resist them I shall lose my mind. I can face anything but insanity, which would be a prolonged embarrassment to those who care for me. I desire that my remains be cremated . . . "

No one can say positively what the truth is in this case, but the rules for discernment of spirits offer a probable solution. If this person were not a Catholic, and especially if he were not even baptized, something could be done for him. For an unbaptized person is, in a certain sense, under the influence of the devil. Missionaries who have spent years in the orient will tell you that frequently there are external manifestations of the devil's rage when catechumens are about to be baptized. At times the neophytes begin to howl in a weird, unearthly manner; then again they fall to the ground and appear all but dead. The prayers which the priest recites at baptism take it for granted that the devil is in or very near the un-

baptized person in a way that he is not in or near a baptized child.

If Mr. Winship were a Catholic and a favorable chance presented itself, we might say to him: "First of all we shall not argue, at least now. Second, the one necessary thing to cure you is not suicide but confession. Jesus Christ is the Supreme Psychiatrist. He is the great King and absolute Monarch of our hearts, of our free will, of our good desires and impulses. He instituted the Sacrament of Penance as an effective relief for saddened hearts. Besides sanctifying grace, it will give you the right to hundreds of actual graces, contrary to the impulse you have which bothers you so cruelly. You know an actual grace is a flash of light to the mind and an impulse to the will to avoid this evil of suicide and to do this good of living on, submissive to God's will. You will receive them as you need them: numbers of impulses to virtue and to purity, and grace to submit to the designs of God in all the events of life.

"Number three, Mr. Winship: go to Holy Communion. There are many entrancing effects which flow from this sacrament. In fact, the catechism enumerates six reasons why Christ instituted it. Here we are chiefly concerned with the third reason. Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist to lessen impulses to evil which come from the devil and which so cruelly deceive you and the rest of us. Just think, Mr. Winship, that this remedy has existed in the world for more than 1900 years, to save all of us from the snares of Satan.

"Number four: Bear in mind that, every time you receive the sacraments, you receive sanctifying grace; and



every time you receive sanctifying grace you are given the right to many actual graces. Also the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are bestowed on you (or an increase of them) every time you approach these sacraments. One of these gifts was especially meant for you in your predicament, for the gift of counsel is 'to warn us of the deceits of the devil and of the dangers to salvation.'

"Then, after receiving these two sacraments from God, let us go back calmly and quietly to your problem, Mr. Winship. You say that this act of suicide was forced upon you, and naturally we ask 'By whom?' You really seem to realize that the impulse came not from you but from outside. From whom? Certainly not from Christ or the good angels. Therefore, there is no one else to whom you can impute this urge except the evil spirit.

"You say you had impulses to kill two people. These impulses became stronger and stronger. I believe you, but you were fighting alone; you were away from the sacraments a long, long time. You were burdened with many mortal sins. You had no supply of actual graces to fight back. You thought you would go insane. I believe you were convinced of this, but it was a lie. You were in no danger of going insane. It was the master stroke of deception by the one who was and is a liar from the beginning. He fooled you. He has fooled a great number of men in the same way — wealthy men, successful men, worldly men. To escape it, you did what the devil long ago set out to get you to do: you killed yourself, and as the tree falleth, so it lieth."

Sometime ago an eighteen-year-old girl poisoned the wife of the man she sinfully loved and wished to marry. Calmly she explained why she did it. "It came to my mind

like a flash," she said, "as I was walking down to keep a luncheon appointment with the woman I hated that I could put something poisonous in what she was to eat. After that nothing under the sun could stop me from doing it." She procured some strychnine and secretly dropped it into the beverage, enough to kill her friend.

According to her own words, a light, a flash, came to her mind. Then an impulse came to her free will; an impulse so powerful that she did not wish to resist it. From whom did it come? Evidently from without, since she says: "It came to me like a flash." Assuredly not from a good angel, not from Christ, therefore, certainly from the devil.

It was a sudden temptation — a flash to the mind and an impulse so insidiously persuasive that it quickly overpowered her. She was not given to self-denial. She was not ready for the struggle. Here we see, as plain as the obvious conclusion that two and two make four, just why holy men and women practice some daily mortification. It is in order to be ready at a moment's notice for the conflict. A faithful soldier keeps his powder dry, and sleeps with one eye open against an unexpected attack from the enemy.

Consider a third case where the devil inflicted cruel pain on his victim. This event occurred some ten years ago in a small town in the southern part of California. The newspapers tell us that a girl about twenty years of age was walking along the railroad tracks. A freight train approached and, as it came opposite to her, she quickly dropped to the ground and extended her right arm so that it might be ground off by the wheels of the train.

Some children, playing near the tracks came upon the girl's unconscious form. These summoned passing motor-



ists who took her to the hospital. Was she insane? Psychiatrists probably would say that she was, or, if in doubt, they would conclude that the girl wished to commit suicide. Viewed according to the rules for discerning spirits the case assumes a very different complexion.

When the girl was asked at the hospital if she was sorry for what she had done, she said: "Sorry for what? My arm was offensive to me and I cut it off as Christ tells us to do in the Gospels. I have always had an impulse to murder with that right arm. Yesterday it became uncontrollable. As I walked by the tracks and heard the freight train approach, I lay down beside the train and, on a sudden impulse, stretched my arm on the track." In further explanation she said: "My first urge to kill came when I was thirteen. My father had scolded and wounded me deeply. Afterward I went to the kitchen and began to slice bread with a big knife. Suddenly the impulse to kill swept through me with almost irresistible force. I was weak and giddy from the effort when finally I subdued it. It came more often, stronger each time, and each time it required less provocation. In my saner moments I almost went mad from shame and fear. Yesterday, when I felt I could bear it no longer, a way out presented itself as I walked beside the track. Without a moment's hesitation I did it. When the train roared by I felt the wheels' biting into my arm, everything went black. I woke up here."

Now what are we to think of such a case? It may be that the girl had a great and holy desire to please God. She may have been in the state of grace, and may have gained great merit before God for her foolish but heroic effort to please Him; but how dreadfully tricked she was. Assuredly anyone, even with a perfunctory knowledge of the



catechism, would not be so crudely and cruelly trapped. Every little Catholic child knows that sin does not come from the arm or the leg but from our free will. The way out is not to cut off one's arm. The way out is confession, and a realization that temptations (in themselves) are not offenses against God, but merely efforts on the part of Satan to lead us astray.

Private interpretation of the Bible came into vogue at the time of the so-called Reformation. It means that there can be as many opinions on a given subject as there are persons. It connotes disorder, confusion, and disrespect for all authority. While this girl was doubtlessly sincere, she was woefully deluded. She recalled those words of our Lord: "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life, maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished."<sup>7</sup> Recalling them, she was convinced that her explanation was correct and — the only correct one. Never for a moment did she dream of any other. Of a truth, the devil can quote Scripture to his own purpose.

Here, as in the other cases, the impulses came from without. "My first urge was to kill. . . . Suddenly the impulse swept through me with almost irresistible force." Since these urges were not from Christ and the good angels, they came from the father of lies — Satan.

Two considerations present themselves as we ponder over the examples just quoted. One, of course, is the vital need of sanctifying grace by which we are freely given the aid and protection of these blessed spirits; and the high esteem in which we should hold it, preferring

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<sup>7</sup> Mark 9:42, 43.

anything, even death itself, to a severance of this bond of loving friendship which exists between God and the soul.

Lastly, there is a common note in the cases we have just mentioned. It may be described as a great perturbation of mind; a tide of despondency and despair. Invariably the presence of the evil one produces this pessimism in the soul. Added to this melancholy is an unreasonable fear which paralyzes the actions of the soul. No one can hope to win a battle in such a frame of mind.

Hence, besides a bouyant cheerfulness and confidence in God's goodness and mercy, the soul must learn never to retreat before the onslaughts of the devil; never to show the white feather, as it were. In order to attain and to maintain good physical condition a daily regime of exercises is essential. Likewise, mental fitness and courage of soul require constant attention. Our spiritual stamina may, like muscles of the body, increase and become hard and invincible; or the soul may become weak and afraid at the first sign of bravado on the part of the evil one.

It is for us to decide which course to adopt.

## Chapter II

### THE ENEMY

In childhood days, when preparing for confession, we were admonished to tell our most embarrassing faults and sins first. In much the same way we treat of the devil and his cohorts in the beginning of this volume, in order to give our attention to more agreeable topics later.

(The good angels are by nature pure spirits, but because of their duty to watch before the throne of God and act as messengers to man, they are spoken of in Holy Scripture according to the duty they perform. For the word *angel* (*angelus*) means *one who is sent*. )

The evil angels, too, are pure spirits in the sense that they have no corporeal substance, but from a moral aspect they are anything but pure upright beings. Here, too, the evil ones receive their names from the nefarious work which occupies their time. *Devil* means *a traducer, a slanderer, an accuser*. It is in this sense that St. John speaks of the devil in the Apocalypse: "The accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night."<sup>1</sup>

Since the time, therefore, that Lucifer and his disobedient angels were driven out of the Creator's presence

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<sup>1</sup> Apoc. 12:10.



and consigned to the bottomless pit of hell, a campaign of defamation and of lies has been carried on among nations and individuals.

But how foolish and unscientific, some will retort, to believe in the existence of such evil spirits. And yet there are many people living on this globe of ours whom we have never seen, but whose objective reality we take for granted. Thousands of people have never visited Rome and have never had the great privilege of an audience with our Holy Father, and, nevertheless, they are convinced that the successor of St. Peter resides there.

There are unseen happenings, like earthquakes or volts of electricity, which are never perceived, but — would you call those who believe in such phenomena foolish? Indeed you would not.

Again, our physical being requires development, and this is obtained by unpleasant as well as by pleasant methods, by rain as well as by sunshine.

We have in mind a priest seriously afflicted by arthritis who, upon the advice of a doctor, set himself to overcome this handicap. There were hours of labor and exercise under hot sun when every bone in his body cried out for rest. There were daily walks from his home on the cliff down to the beach below. There were cold plunges into the surf, and the plunges became more frequent as the days went by. The battle is not entirely won as yet; but the padre is getting into a condition where a normal day's work is now possible — where he is able to aid others as well as himself.

We mention the incident simply to illustrate the way a valiant heart may eventually turn sickness into health, failure into success.

It is not impossible, therefore, to suppose that the good God who, in His infinite wisdom, tries all rational beings, should test us by spiritual adversaries as well as by physical and mental incumbrances. Heaven is a place of such extraordinary bliss and of such never ending joys that only the tried and true are to be granted admission behind those jasper walls.

When we enter the realm of spiritism (and it is without a doubt a dangerous realm) we find further reason for belief in an evil spirit. Those who have made an exhaustive study of the matter (and we mean by this those men and women who are recognized as prominent authorities on the subject) — [these people are of the opinion that spirits surround us always and in all places. They communicate to us impulses and ideas which, according to their character are beneficent or malicious, agreeable or repulsive.]

Some of these scientists (as mentioned by J. Godfrey Raupert in his volume on modern spiritism) are even of the opinion that instead of using all these modern psychological terms, such as unconscious, subliminal, secondary, or tertiary personality, we should go back to the old-fashioned terms of demon and evil spirit. But the main obstacle of the conventional scientist to admitting intelligences outside ourselves arises from the fear of being considered medieval and in agreement with the old Church. As a well-known student of psychological research remarks: "The man who denies the phenonema of spiritism today is not entitled to be called a skeptic; he is simply ignorant and it would be a hopeless task to attempt to enlighten him."



## 1. WHO ARE THE EVIL SPIRITS?

In the lives of some of the saints, unusual occurrences have taken place which seem to indicate the presence of the evil one. In possessed persons the devil's proximity is taken for granted. Nevertheless, the Church does not venture to prove conclusively from reason alone the objective reality of such spirits. She shows us how probable such a belief is; but she relies on Revelation to substantiate fully such a claim.

The Old and the New Testaments abound in classic references to that epochal conflict in the skies before the clock of earth began to count its minutes and its hours. As St. John tells us: "And there was a great battle in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast into the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."<sup>2</sup>

The high rank which Lucifer, the light bearer, is supposed to have held in the hierarchy of the angels lends credence to the idea of rebellion against the Almighty; for it is usually those who stand nearest the throne who covet kingly honors. Hence the words of Isaias: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations? And thou saidst in thy heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the

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<sup>2</sup> Apoc. 12:7-9.

sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most high.' But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit."<sup>3</sup>

Although we can deduce nothing definite as to the cause of this stupendous upheaval among the heavenly throngs, many learned theologians have conjectured that the mystery of the Divine Incarnation was revealed to them; they saw that a nature lower than their own was to be hypostatistically united to the person of God the Son and that the entire hierarchy of heaven was ordered to bow down in majesty before the Incarnate Word.

Be the reasons for the conflict what they may, the Fourth Lateran Council, held in the year 1215, explicitly teaches the existence of fallen angels. "For the devil and the other demons were by nature created good. But they, through their own fault, became evil." In other words, Lucifer and his cohorts do not differ in their natural powers from those angels who remained faithful. Not long ago we heard a remark which claimed our attention. The gentlemen said: "Communists and radicals: They are missionaries traveling in reverse." Both the honest communist and the fervent missionary are actively engaged in a battle but—on opposite sides. Their ideologies are wholly different.

So, too, in respect to the demons. They hate God. They are forever excluded from His glorious presence. They abhor us because we are destined some day to occupy those vacant thrones. They work from within as well as from without. In each human being is a fifth column ready to join hands with the evil one. Look the facts squarely in the face. From within we discover that our

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<sup>3</sup> Isa. 14:12-15.



intellect is darkened, our will prone to evil. We perceive the better things and approve them, but unfortunately we follow the baser. Here, then, is the citadel of the heart which unless nurtured and protected from on high, easily will fall to the enemy.

And now look at the scene without. On all sides are enemies; invisible, it is true, but numerous and malignant, nevertheless.

Most readers are familiar with that painting where Christ, looking over Jerusalem with sorrow and sadness, compares Himself to a hen that tenderly gathers her young beneath protecting wings. Although the picture is well known to the majority of us, the unconquerable love and pathos back of the picture is recognized by only a few. As a hen by the warmth of her body and gentle solicitude broods over the eggs until life is generated in them, so, too, does Christ's infinite love rest affectionately upon each one of us to restore and maintain us in His Father's friendship.

If this, then, be the way the Creator acts in respect to human beings; if He showers His love and affection on our hearts even though they were faint shadows of His Heart Divine; if we on earth, who are so far removed from the perfections of the Godhead, are so numerous — what, think you, must be the vast multitudes of those celestial hosts who, being incorporeal, resemble so closely the Creator Himself? "It must be said that the angels exist in an exceedingly great number far beyond all material multitude. There are many blessed armies of the heavenly intelligences surpassing the weak and limited reckoning of our material numbers." So remarks St. Dionysius.

We speak of the great number of angelic spirits before

the fall for one main reason: Those who rebelled were by no means so numerous as those who remained faithful. This may be proved by the fact that the senses are the inducements which lead the majority of mankind into sin, whereas in the angels we find only an intellectual nature, and sin is something discordant to such a nature.

Nevertheless, since the multitude of the heavenly hosts is so numerous, the segment of those who rebelled is by no means small. Against these wicked ones the Christian always must be on his guard. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places."<sup>4</sup>

Not only are the devils a vast horde, but they are viciously wicked as well. The effective cognition of God which produces love of the Creator has been taken away from them; and as baffled and destructive marauders they go around with fiendish glee, ever striving to bring about a similar condition among the children of men — to deprive them of sanctifying grace and the ineffable joy and happiness which go along with this great gift.

## 2. FALSE PROMISES

Fully understanding, therefore, that our adversaries are many and cunningly intent upon our everlasting destruction, let us devote a few moments to a consideration of their methods of approach.

Have you ever awakened suddenly around the hour of midnight and found yourself all in a dither? It is evident to you that a prowler is in the house. You listen intently for some moments. Then a squeak is heard on the stairway,

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<sup>4</sup> Eph. 6:12.



announcing the burglar's advent. You quickly switch on the light — only sheepishly to realize that no one is in the house. A bogey has been artfully built up — a being that has no existence except in the recesses of your brain.

After such a harrowing experience the nerves do not return to normal at once. For some time you remain awake. Then, while just on the verge of falling off again to sleep, you hear a veritable thunderclap. You sit up in bed once more, possessed with the notion that an intruder is close at hand; and once more you turn on the light by your bed. But no stranger is in the house. You are alone. After settling down to sleep again, you hear a repetition of the noise you heard previously. However, it is not a thunderclap. Far from it. It is — just a mouse, running merrily across some papers on the floor.

An incident such as the above describes somewhat faithfully the general course which the devil follows. Emotionalism is present. So, too, are deceptions, hallucinations, and frauds. However, there are a few objective facts to trap the intended victim and to indicate likewise the presence of the evil one. Man possesses an insatiable yearning for God and the things of God; and the soul's desire to communicate with its Maker is normally satisfied through meditation and prayer. Of this the devil is fully aware, and with dastardly cunning he makes use of this knowledge to destroy mankind.

Pretending to be an angel of light, Lucifer tricks men and women into belief that they are actually in touch with truth and the source of all goodness. These tactics are not new. They have been in use from time immemorial. They existed before the Greeks presented their difficulties to Apollo in his temple at Delphi and begged from him a

solution. The answer of the petitioner was usually an enigmatic reply which readily could be interpreted into opposite meanings.

Or consider the Romans and the manner in which they were accustomed to consult the Sibylline oracles. The prophecies of these seeresses were so widely circulated in antiquity that Varro (quoted by Lactantius) enumerates ten: the Persian, the Sibyan, the Selphian, the Cinimerian, the Erythrean, the Samaritan, the Cumean and those of the Hellespont, of Phrygia, and Tibur. The Sibyls most highly thought of in Rome were those of Cumae and Erythraea. Today we are likely to be supercilious and condemnatory as we consider the wide appeal which these oracular pronouncements made to the people of that age. Nevertheless, are our hands clean in the matter? By no means.

In every large city (and small ones too, for that matter) there are scores of persons who prey upon the rich and the intelligent as well as upon the poor and the ignorant. The rich consult their favorite seer or seeress amid an atmosphere of oriental splendor. They request guidance on weighty matters and trivial ones; and willingly pay the exorbitant fee. Yet, when it comes to their attention that someone has given a modest donation to further the cause of religion, their animosity knows no bounds. They will speak disparagingly of the Church and of her divine mission on earth; they will tell anecdotes which tend to support the notion that the Church is mercenary and — and they themselves are spending twenty times as much in chasing after lies and frauds as the ordinary Catholic contributes to the support of the true faith.

But it is not only in respect to individuals and the



actions of individuals that the devil holds the leash hand. He is primarily interested in the spread of false ideas. This was the bait he used to capture our first parents. Despite the fact that God had created the universe for their special enjoyment; notwithstanding His explicit command that there was one tree of whose fruit He did not wish them to eat, their resistance nevertheless broke down and they became as pliant fools under the mesmerism of the evil one. The devil is fiendishly clever. Holy Scripture plainly tells us that "The serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God made."<sup>5</sup>

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We must bear in mind, constantly, that when it suits his purpose he acts in a very bestial manner. It is the usual method he employs against those who have not been taught to control themselves or their passions — who continue to pile one mortal sin upon another. Still, even here there is exaggeration almost without limit. He depicts the sin in question in a totally misleading guise, representing it as something alluringly good and in accordance with our better nature; and it is only when we have fallen that the real condition of affairs becomes evident. Then we discover too late that his solicitations are contrary to truth. As always, he is a liar and prevaricator *par excellence*.

The craftiness and cunning of the devil is clearly seen in the sin of Adam and Eve. God had gone to extraordinary lengths in order to provide for them happiness and contentment. "And the Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of."<sup>6</sup> After placing Adam in the midst of this glorious wonderland and making him lord over all creation, the Almighty

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<sup>5</sup> Gen. 3:1.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 2:9.



took into consideration Adam's social nature, thereby demonstrating His limitless affection and love. Lest he were lonesome, a companion is given to him.

It is upon the helpmate that the devil first turns his attention. She is very intimately associated with the one appointed by the Almighty to rule this earthly paradise. He asks what appears on the surface to be an innocent question. But behind a great number of questions lies a hidden and barbed hook. So it was in the days of Christ — "Why don't Your disciples fast? — Why do You consort with sinners? — Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" The devil and his emissaries have a great penchant for questions. So it was in the beginning.

Instead of ignoring something that was neither her business nor the devil's, Eve guiltily gives ear to the problem he propounds. "Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?"<sup>7</sup> Back of every sin, be it a serious or a slight infraction of the law of God, lies a common note. Always — directly or indirectly — there is a challenge, a questioning of the Creator's authority. Why? Why? Why cannot I have a tiny piece of candy? Why cannot I have great possessions and fabulous wealth? Why are not signal honors bestowed upon me? Why am I in this lowly position? Why am I treated with scant respect and oftentimes subjected to adversities and humiliations? Such are the sophistic queries which the evil one, either by himself or through the Charlie McCarthy voice of another demon, uses to drive in the wedge which ultimately separates us from God.

We are acquainted with a priest who was falsely accused on more than one occasion. He is not at all bitter over his

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<sup>7</sup> Gen. 3:1.

experiences. Quite the contrary, one evening he made a remark well worth repeating. He said, "When I hear someone complaining about those in authority it nauseates me at once." For this dear padre, the clouds are fortunately now long past. Rapidly he is mounting the ladder of distinction and preferment; but his true worth was revealed when he obeyed under circumstances most trying to human nature — when he was able to perceive the Creator in the person of a stern superior.

It was Theodore Roosevelt — if memory does not deceive us — who once uttered a few similar words anent respect for authority. He declared that three units could be relied upon in America: the Army, the Navy, and the Catholic Church. Naturally such a remark is not to be taken in a monopolistic fashion. There are many very loyal Americans besides the Catholic minority. But T. R. wished to make it clear that obedience, irrespective of the persons issuing the commands, is not universally esteemed in the land of the free and the home of the brave. He wished to declare that in his day (as in our own) there is a woeful spirit of indifference toward rightfully constituted authority. We, as a nation, do not look upon and revere discipline and obedience as we should.

Such a pernicious apathy is not difficult to track down. We have inherited it from those far-off ages when Eve answered the serpent's question and said, "Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die."<sup>8</sup>

"And the serpent said to the woman: 'No, you shall not

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<sup>8</sup> Gen. 3:3.



die the death.' ”<sup>9</sup> Lies again and again. Assuredly, he is true to his name of traducer and liar from the beginning. And now comes the build-up, the amplification of those lies into a dreamlike fabric composed of falsehoods and deceptions.

“For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”<sup>10</sup>

The promises of the devil revolve around the future and not around the present — “In what day soever you *shall* eat thereof, your eyes *shall* be opened; and you *shall* be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Rationalists and atheists are prone to make disparaging remarks about the Catholic Church, accentuating the point that our reward is in another existence and not on earth. In reality it is in both. The Christian receives a hundredfold here and life everlasting in the world to come. It is only the devil and his agents who promise and who do not fulfill. The evil one told our first parents that they would be as God, and, deluded by this notion of grandeur, “the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat.”<sup>11</sup>

As in the days of Adam and Eve, so today, the world is seriously led astray. Consider for a moment the sway of birth control. In almost every city are institutions with innocuous and even glamorous names; and yet the main purpose in these places is to go contrary to the laws of nature and nature’s God. Into the camp of transients come well-paid nurses who openly boast that their salaries

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<sup>9</sup> Gen. 3:4.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 3:5.

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 3:6.



are derived from the babies who never see the light of day because of their hellish counsel and advice.

Conscientious social workers, on the contrary, will tell you time out of count that they are not employed when the directors of such clinics discover that they do not favor such fiendishly anti-Christian practices. This evil is almost universal in the land today. We have pages from the Old Testament warning us against the disastrous results of this horrible crime; and we have seen with our own eyes how nations in our day have lost their pristine greatness because of it. The fifth column which betrayed France was not a group of plotters and saboteurs. It just completed what birth control began three or four generations before.

We have made divorce fashionable today; but the most respectable thing in America is still looked upon as dis-respectable, as something dishonorable and immodest: We mean, of course, a large family. So it comes about in the United States that, while rural families are reproducing at a rate of 60 per cent in excess of the rate needed for replacement, the people in cities of 100,000 or more were in 1930 about 25 per cent short of having enough births for replacements. Already women of childbearing age are not having enough children to replace the next generation.

Again, this methodical extermination of human beings, especially in the more populous sections of the south and the southwest is being carried on with the approbation and co-operation of government officials. A part of your taxes, in other words, is being used to destroy immortal souls and retard the real progress of the country. However, crafty cunningness is very much in evidence in the assault. Those parts of the land are heaviest attacked where

simplicity and ignorance predominate. Of old, good tidings were brought to all unfortunates and outcasts. The message of the gentle Christ instilled hope and courage into their toil-worn hearts; for the poor had the Gospel preached to them.

But the message heard today is from another camp. This chant of controlling crops, pigs, horses, and human beings, and of not controlling ourselves, is from hell. Make no mistake about it; for the more subtle and the more entrancing the fruit of the tree seems to be, the more repellent ought it to become in our eyes, considering (as you and I should) the deceiver who proffers it for us to eat. He is an adept in the use of masks and disguises. So much so that even innocent people are frequently lead astray by his wiles.

We once knew of a rather forward pupil whose chief delight was to arouse the instructor's ire. This particular teacher, however, was invariably master of the situation. When the pupil presented an ill-timed question, he received an answer which cowed and, at the same time, brought considerable humiliation upon him. On one occasion the boy remarked that there was a masquerade ball to be held in the not too distant future; and he asked the professor just what costume he would advise him to wear. The professor quickly retored, "Go disguised as a gentleman and not even your own mother will recognize you."

Of course, the professor's able reply subdued the precocity of the stripling, at least for the time being; but the answer given has a broader application: It quite aptly describes the devil's method of approach. He seeks our ruin not infrequently by representing himself as a gallant



rescuer; and we poor fools are oftentimes duped by such a disguise. There is nothing wrong, so he says, for a girl to go out once or twice with a married man, and the man is so courteous, so gentlemanly, so noble. After a few weeks this paragon of virtue is sole master of the girl's heart, and when he suggests obtaining a divorce and marrying her outside the Church, the silly little thing readily consents.

Or consider the "manly" and "gentlemanly" methods which are used to circumvent religious men and women. For example, the evil one presses the point that smoking will aid one in making friends and, as a consequence, in securing converts. The same plea is made in regard to the consumption of alcoholic beverages. And yet thousands upon thousands of converts would be brought into the Church did we but deny ourselves these customary creature comforts. St. Francis Xavier, the Little Flower, and countless other holy men and women who were noted for the vast number of souls they brought to God — these were likewise celebrated for the mortifications they practiced upon themselves.

### 3. TEMPTATION TO DESPAIR

Our immortal foe, the devil, has another way of dealing with us which is disreputable in the extreme. When we have unfortunately separated ourselves from God through mortal sin, the enemy of our salvation strives to make it appear as if all were lost. By injecting fear and pusillanimity into our hearts he hopes to win the fight quickly. Have you ever witnessed a brawl between two half-drunken lumberjacks where no rules prevail and where any method of punishing the aggressor is tolerated? Well, such a melee



is a dandified affair compared to the vicious tactics of our archenemy. Once he has us down he strives to keep us in the slough of despair by means that are thoroughly in keeping with his character.

That his nefarious tactics are succeeding is apparent from the rising tide of suicides throughout the land. Men do away with themselves because they have been persuaded that there is no other method of escape open, and the persuader is the devil.

I think it was Chesterton who once remarked that those who have the faith have the fun too. They possess a deep, solid, intense joy during their days on earth. On the contrary, those who have lost divine grace have likewise lost contentment, satisfaction, and peace. They no longer believe in the wholesome things of life and, as a result, they are enveloped in the mists and fogs of atheism and agnosticism. It is at this juncture that Lucifer gives the *coup de grâce* to many of his victims. For months — possibly for years — he has tricked them periodically into losing the friendship of God; and gradually, along with gloom and depression, he injects another element. He implants into their hearts the notion that it is useless to fight on — that the only sensible procedure is to raise the white flag, to despair of, in a word, the greatest of all God's attributes — His boundless mercy.

The thought has oftentimes struck us, like a trip hammer strikes a white-hot piece of steel, that the reason for those unforgettable parables about the goodness of our heavenly Father in the New Testament is not alone to impress upon our befuddled brains His infinite tenderness and mercy toward us, but to caution us likewise lest we walk into the trap which Satan has set for our ruin.

With a minimum of words we are told that Judas hanged himself with a halter, but when the evangelists describe the goodness and kindness of God toward repentant sinners there is noticeable not only an amplification of the subject but a thorough portrayal as well. We easily can picture to ourselves the lonesomeness of the prodigal's father while his boy is in the land far distant. We readily see the look of joy in the old man's face as he recognizes in the woebegone figure his own dear son. We are a part of the household as they rush excitedly about to obtain fresh clothing for the lad. We have a new and more exalted idea of sanctifying grace as we hear the father say: "Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this, my son, was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found."<sup>12</sup>

We, too, should possess an unfaltering trust in God that, no matter how many and grievous our sins may be, never shall we offend against His goodness to such an extent as to despair of His mercy.

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 15:22-24.

## Chapter III

### THE GOOD ANGELS

That God loves us personally and with an undying affection is a revelation which we have heard so often as almost to forget that we ever heard it at all. Such things happen not infrequently. For many people a primrose is just a primrose and — nothing more. With unseeing eyes we watch the sun daily rise and set. Monotonously and carelessly we walk back and forth across the expensive carpet in the antechamber until it becomes worn and shoddy; but the idea that there is a throne room beyond and that upon that throne the King waits to receive us — this seldom dawns upon us. In brief, we do not get below the surface to contemplate realities.

On Palomar Mountain in Southern California scientists are placing into position the largest mechanical device for viewing the heavens which the world has known. By means of this gigantic telescope the heavens become our next-door neighbor. We perceive constellations which before were hidden from our view.

Verily we have need of a spiritual instrument in this valley of tears to arouse us from our lethargy and bring us to a deep realization of the spiritual joys we possess.

Meditate for an hour, for a month, a year, or even



a lifetime on that one sentence: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."<sup>1</sup> The result is always the same. You cannot exhaust that which is inexhaustible, you cannot fully fathom that which is unfathomable.

As with the Incarnation, so likewise is it with the life, suffering, and death of our Divine Lord. These incomparable blessings are taken as though they were our due, and an earthquake of the soul is needed to arouse us from the materialistic concepts which occupy most of our time and prevent us from seeing things as they should be seen.

Our attitude toward the Holy Eucharist is, unfortunately, no exception to the rule. A recent convert who had labored for many years with Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago and who now receives her Master daily in Holy Communion is not crushed by individual faults of Catholics. Far from it. This she readily understands; but the great mystery to her is the coldness and indifference of the ordinary person toward the Blessed Sacrament.

Lack of enthusiastic appreciation of the angels is another manifestation of worldliness. Possibly we possess a theoretic knowledge of them, but this belief is not woven into the fiber of our being. It is not part and parcel of our daily lives. Consequently we — and the rest of the world too — are in a slough of pessimism and despondency which it is difficult to overestimate. We are down in the uttermost depths just because we insist to use a material remedy to cure a spiritual ill.

Catholics (and non-Catholics alike) are greatly concerned over the irreligious trends which are so noticeable abroad. When Peter asked the Christ what John would do, he was

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:14.

quietly yet firmly told: "What is it to thee? Follow thou Me."<sup>2</sup> Here is the detour which involves us in so many difficulties. We put the stethoscope on the other man. We examine him and all his defects. Of our own weaknesses and sins we know but little.

Because of the quagmire in which we are there is need of a strong counterirritant. We require some Little Boy Blue to sound his horn over mountains and meadows, to call us back from the mists and shadows to a braver faith and a simpler mode of life. It is precisely here that the angels have their tasks to perform.

### 1. WHERE IS OUR FAITH?

Today we are in a rather dangerous street — the street of fear. News analysts and commentators bombard us many times daily over the radio. They disturb us, they agitate us, they affright us. Somehow we get the idea that we are alone and that God has forsaken us. Against such temptations the angels are a bulwark of confidence and strength.

Many a reader will remember that consoling incident in the Fourth Book of Kings. The Israelites were at war with the Syrians and the latter had laid ambushes to take their enemies by surprise, but Eliseus knew from God the deceits of the Syrians and warned his brethren against them. The king of Syria decided, therefore, that the only way to outwit the Israelites was to take the prophet prisoner. Eliseus, so his enemies learned, was in Dothan, and thither went horses and chariots and the strength of the Syrian army to capture the man of God. There were literally thousands against one man. They surrounded

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<sup>2</sup> John 21:22.



the town by night and, at dawn, the boy who was servant to the prophet saw this immense body of soldiers. Because the lad loved Eliseus, he was naturally perturbed, for he foresaw nothing but capture for himself and his master.

“And the servant of the man of God rising early, went out, and saw an army round about the city, and horses and chariots: and he told him, saying: ‘Alas, alas, alas, my lord, what shall we do?’ But he answered: ‘Fear not: for there are more with us than with them.’ ”

“And Eliseus prayed, and said: ‘Lord, open his eyes, that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw: and behold the mountains were full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Eliseus.”<sup>3</sup>

The rest of the story is quickly told. Eliseus besought the Almighty to blind the enemies of Israel and deliver them up to him. The request was granted, and Eliseus brought them into the camp of the Israelites. After giving the enemy plenty to eat, they were allowed to return to their own land without harm being done to any one of them. The effect of the prophet’s artifice reverberated far and wide and, as the Scriptures remind us, “the robbers of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

The story in itself is an enthralling one. But the unique angle to it comes from the words of Eliseus when he discovers his servant boy wringing his hands and wondering just what will become of them. Eliseus gives no thought to himself nor is he concerned about the vast army which has encircled them. He has too much trust in God for that. But the prophet is saddened because his faithful little servant is looking upon human happenings

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<sup>3</sup> 4 Kings 6:15-17.

<sup>4</sup> 4 Kings 6:23.



from a natural viewpoint. In the midst of an event where the boy's life and his own are seriously endangered the man of God is interested in something that probably would never enter our minds at such a moment. We would quickly run for shelter, ransacking our brains to discover some way of eluding the enemy. We would erect barricades against the oncoming foe. Not so Eliseus. He left his own care and the boy's where it rightfully belonged: in the hands of the Almighty.

The lad's lack of faith disturbed the prophet. Here was something infinitely more important than the danger which threatened them. Hence he took time out to instruct the boy, to allay his fears, to remind him that "there are more with us than with them."

Human nature has not changed much since the time of Eliseus. Today, as then, it is far more important to recapture our faith in God than to escape successfully the snares of thousands of foes. The former is a spiritual victory, and the latter, at best, is only a material advantage. Eliseus was particularly interested in the spiritual welfare of his servant, and because he pleaded with the Almighty in a sincere and fervent manner, his petition was granted. The lad did see the hosts of heaven fighting valiantly for our eternal salvation. And if we ask perseveringly and wholeheartedly for this selfsame grace, then our eyes too shall be opened and we will perceive the countless hosts of angels who labor incessantly for our spiritual triumph.

Such a vision will, with the help of God, arouse in us sentiments of gratitude, of admiration, and of love. A realization of how the good God guards us by means of these blessed spirits should melt the coldest of hearts. The Creator thinks so much of you and of me as to shield us

by countless spiritual warriors. He even goes so far as to assign an angel guardian to each individual. In the world about us, it is usually only kings and potentates who are privileged always to have on hand a group of men to guard and protect them. The common run of people must do without such luxuries, and as a consequence man is frequently waylaid, his money taken from him, and, at times, he is even murdered.

But in the spiritual world it is not so. Here we see with striking clearness just what God thinks of the human soul. He lifts man up from the mire of his sins and weaknesses to place him with the princes — the princes of his people. God has not only elevated us to a dignity a little less than the angels, He has done more. (He has given His angels charge over us lest we dash our feet against a stone.) In the Incarnation, on the heights of Calvary, in the Blessed Eucharist, we inadequately grasp the preciousness of a human soul. But when we strive to pierce beyond the veil and to grasp the everlasting splendor of the King of Glory, we perceive in the innumerable attendants about His throne another cogent reason to admire the super-exalted dignity of man. We see the cohorts of the Lord God, as David saw them. "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him."<sup>5</sup> We see the Lord sitting upon a throne on high and elevated. "His train filled the temple."<sup>6</sup> As we gaze in awe and admiration on that wondrous scene we hear the great St. Paul cry out: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"<sup>7</sup>

In number they are like the sands of the sea, and the

<sup>5</sup> Dan. 7:10.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. 6:1.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. 2:14.



stars which no man can count, and still they are sent for those "who shall receive the inheritance of salvation." In brief, God desires them to look after His friends.

There is a great deal of blackness in the world today. There is hatred in high places; there is despair in the lowlands. Even in the hearts of religious men and women we discover, at times, a cynicism and despondency which are very much at variance with the garb they wear. No one may deny that a storm of herculean proportions rages about us. But there have been storms in one form or another ever since the world began. It is not the storm that matters. It is the faith within which gives us the power to ride out a tempest. "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith!"<sup>8</sup>

We understand perfectly that, at times, God tries a soul by desolation and aridity, for we are at present in a probation period and this lasts until death. Here we are not concerned about abnormal normalities which are part of everyday existence, and may arise from some physical weakness, from a disjointed attitude of the mind, or from a combination of both. Frequently they come directly from God to aid us in our climb toward the heavenly kingdom.

But there is more than mere aridity in the turmoil which exists about us these days. There is, on the part of many, a grumbling, a whining, a questioning of God Himself. Why does the Almighty allow such a ghastly and horrible thing to happen? Will the storm soon subside? Why are so many innocent souls allowed to suffer and perish? These, and dozens of similar remarks, depress the minds of people greatly. They are bound to do so.

But suppose we turn our mind from such vain queries

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<sup>8</sup> Matt. 8:26.



and suppose we allow it to dwell on still another proof of God's infinite love for us: His creation of the angels and their power to aid us to reach our everlasting home. Then our thoughts are dutifully brought back to the one thing necessary — our soul's eternal salvation. Everything else is passing and of little moment, even though it may seem to be so tremendously important to some. As a consequence, our serenity and peace of soul return. We are in another sphere — a sphere of cheerfulness, happiness, and joy. And all just because we considered our deep debt to the Creator in giving us His angels to watch over us.

## 2. TRUE FRIENDS ARE PRICELESS

Occasionally we read the story of a glorious love of man for man. The affection of Jonathan for David is one of these. How many happy hours they spent together! What fortitude and perseverance they drew from this attachment is easily discernible for one who reads between the lines in the First Book of Kings.

"And David and Jonathan made a covenant, for he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the coat with which he was clothed, and gave it to David, and the rest of his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."<sup>9</sup> What efforts were made to pry these two apart! The envy of Jonathan's father, King Saul, the jealousies of those who were displeased at the attention showered upon David — these and a dozen more wedges were used to separate the two. But all in vain! They were bound by a covenant, and a covenant is a holy thing.

When the going becomes rougher still, and Saul's insane

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings 18:3-4.

hatred mounts to new heights and enemies spring up on every side, it is Jonathan who takes David out into a field, lest anyone hear his words, and says to him: "O Lord God of Israel, if I shall discover my father's mind, tomorrow or the day after, and there be anything good for David, and I send not immediately to thee, and make it known to thee, may the Lord do so and so to Jonathan and add still more. But if my father shall continue in malice against thee, I will discover it to thy ear, and will send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace, and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father."<sup>10</sup>

Now we realize full well that a great deal of sentimentality has been written about friendship. We also readily concede that there are certain fires of affection which grow cold and finally die a natural death. But granted that love may turn in time to hate; yet such a train of thought is no argument against those indestructible unions which not only survive every obstacle but seem to grow stronger under assaults. There are many such indissoluble unions which have survived the years, and the fact proves beyond the shadow of doubt that there are true as well as false friendships, just as we come across counterfeit coins where we expect to find real ones.

Dwell for a moment on the benefits which accrued to David and Jonathan because of the mutual bond between them. They were able to comfort and console each other. While their mutual interests were always kept in the foreground they awoke early in life to a truth which the majority master only when about to die: the fact, namely, that love consists rather in giving than in receiving. Hence, Jonathan, the rich boy, gives his most valued

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Kings 20:12-13.



possessions to David; while the shepherd lad in turn bestows on Jonathan his undying fealty and devotion. Jonathan knew full well that were it not for the presence of David, he, Jonathan, would be in line as king over Israel, after the demise of Saul. Nothing could come between them. When Saul strives to capture David, Jonathan assists him to escape. In the entire biblical narrative no pettiness nor rancor nor jealousy is visible. Always they are friends, loyal and true to the end. At last, the anger of Saul reaches its pinnacle. David is pursued into the desert.

Even so, Jonathan goes into the desert too. "And Jonathan the son of Saul arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hands in God: and he said to him: 'Fear not: for the hand of my father Saul shall not find thee, and thou shalt reign over Israel, and I shall be next to thee, yea, and my father knoweth this.'"<sup>11</sup> The last part of this prediction did not, unfortunately, come to pass. Jonathan was killed in battle and David, on hearing the news, was inconsolable. He holds no hatred against Saul for his many acts of treachery, but mourns for Jonathan. "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the valiant, the arrow of Jonathan never turned back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty. Saul and Jonathan, lovely, and comely in their life, even in death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions."<sup>12</sup>

Now if from the innermost depths of our being we thank the Almighty for His graciousness in bestowing upon us a friend, loyal and true, what should be our everlasting gratitude toward the Creator for bestowing upon

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Kings, 24:16-17.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Kings 2:22-23.



each one a spiritual associate in the finest acceptance of the word?

But, besides gratitude, our hearts should be filled with admiration for these ministering spirits. To begin, let us limit this admiration (for the time being) to the angels themselves. (They are participants in the joys of heaven. Or, as the Saviour expressed it, "they always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."<sup>13</sup>) A heavenly sheen frequently is visible when they appear in corporeal guise on this globe of ours. Not so long ago a person sadly said to me, "There are so many broken wings among men and women of earth." That is true. Even the saints felt this inability to free themselves entirely from the cares of the body. We are exiled children of the stars. This we clearly understand from experience.

(But the angels are pure spirits. They are heavenly ministers created by God for the specific purpose of aiding us in our journey toward paradise. "Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared."<sup>14</sup>) Hence it follows that they can lift us lest we dash our feet against a stone. They are able to mend our wings, so to speak, permitting us to soar more rapidly than is usually the case, toward that heavenly home which will — we trust — be eventually ours.

Frequently we run across this same thought both in the Old and the New Testament. We are asked to look ahead and to look upward. "Lift up thy eyes," said the Lord to Abram, "and look from the place wherein thou now art, to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west. All the land which thou seest, I will give to

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<sup>13</sup> Matt. 18:10.

<sup>14</sup> Exod. 23:20.

thee, and to thy seed for ever.”<sup>15</sup> Or recall the words of the Saviour: “Do not you say, ‘There are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh?’ Behold, I say to you, ‘lift up your eyes, and see the countries; for they are white already to harvest.’”<sup>16</sup>

To infuse a spirit of indestructible buoyancy and hope into our souls is the special prerogative of the angels. These are the blessed ones who are dismayed by nothing. They are the phalanxes of the valiant. You recall when our Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemani, and the rabble was approaching to take Him prisoner. The apostles were inclined to consider things from a materialistic angle. They expected that the Christ would establish an earthly kingdom in Israel. “And behold one of them that were with Jesus, stretching forth his hand, drew out his sword; and striking the servant of the high priest, cut off his ear. Then Jesus saith to him: ‘Put up again thy sword into its place: for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?’”<sup>17</sup> But, while Christ did not desire His angels to fight His cause, He did accept their sympathy and encouragement.

This thought is beautifully brought out by Cardinal Newman in “The Dream of Gerontius.”

Father, Whose goodness none can know but they  
 Who see Thee face to face,  
 By man hath come the infinite display  
 Of Thine all-loving grace;  
 But fallen man — the creature of a day —  
 Skills not that love to trace

<sup>15</sup> Gen. 13:14-15.

<sup>16</sup> John 4:35.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 26:51-53.



It needs, to tell the triumph Thou hast wrought,  
An Angel's deathless fire, an Angel's reach of thought.

It needs that very Angel who, with awe,  
Amid the garden shade,  
The great Creator in His sickness saw,  
Soothed by a creature's aid,  
And agonized, as victim of the Law  
Which He himself had made;  
For who can praise Him in His depth and height  
But he who saw Him reel amid the solitary fight.

(And these spirits who comforted the Master in His hour of dire need will not fail to render assistance to us in our hour of anguish. Yet our admiration for the angels should rest not merely on the aid they bestow on us, the joy they bring us; we should go further still and spend a few moments in contemplating their intrinsic dignity and excellence.)

Every kingly palace has its retinue of soldiers and attendants no matter how depleted the treasury may happen to be; and if this is the custom with earthly monarchs, how unparalleled must be the number and the splendor of those blessed ones who bow before the Almighty and sing to Him a song of never ending praise and thanksgiving for His infinite mercies toward us. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients; and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction.'"<sup>18</sup>

It may surprise some readers that the Scriptures speak

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<sup>18</sup> Apoc. 5:11-12.



so frequently about the immense number of the angels. But this surprise soon passes when we reflect upon their nature. (Being pure spirits, they are creatures nearest to the Godhead. Every effect must in some way imitate its cause, as St. Thomas reminds us. God produces creatures purely by intellect and will (as there is no other executive power in the Almighty). And as intellect and will are not corporeal powers but spiritual ones (which in God are of His very substance), so it follows that the creatures which are most similar to God are intellectual and purely spiritual substances. Again, it is the perfection of the universe which God chiefly intends by the creation of beings; and the more perfect some things are, in so much greater a number are they created by God.) There is no parallel in the magnitude of those incorruptible bodies which sail through the blue vaults of heaven and the corruptible substances of earth; so, too, there is no comparison in the stupendous multitude of the immaterial beings created by God and the material substances made by His hands.

It is not only the immense number of the angels which arouse admiration in us; it is especially their innate greatness and their personal goodness. In appearance they are so majestic and awe inspiring that men have frequently taken them to be the Creator Himself. Even though an angel be recognized as a messenger of the Lord, still the reverence and fear are usually so stupendous as to cause the person concerned to fear lest he forthwith die. The case of Gideon illustrates our point.

The Israelites had fallen into many sins and, because of these transgressions, they were oppressed by the Midianites. These adversaries watched the children of God

as they toiled in the fields. They fiendishly waited until crops and flocks were ready to be enjoyed. Then they pounced upon the Israelites, humiliating them exceedingly. At last the Lord took pity upon the dire plight of His children. He sent His angel to speak with Gideon who was threshing and cleansing wheat before fleeing from the face of the Madianites. The words of God's messenger were very encouraging. He said: "The Lord is with thee, O most valiant of men."<sup>19</sup> But Gideon, being a very humble person, was rather dubious that the Creator should pick him out for so great a task. "Behold my family is the meanest in Manasses, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said to him: 'I will be with thee: and thou shalt cut off Madian as one man.'"<sup>20</sup>

### 3. GOD LOVES HUMILITY

Here is the prerogative which opens the floodgates. Besides gratitude and admiration, the angels evoke our everlasting love because, being so exalted, so near the throne of God, they are so pure, so humble, so eager to consort with the lowest of the low. Since the Lord commands it, His angel comes to this poor outcast, Gideon, and calls him most valiant of men simply because his heart is pure and childlike. The angel even works the miracle which Gideon in his simplicity requests and then quickly vanishes from sight. It is then that Gideon, trembling with fear and awe, falls to the ground in expectation of death because he had conversed with an angel. It is only when God assures him that all is well that he finally recovers from his fright.

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<sup>19</sup> Judges 6:12.

<sup>20</sup> Judges 6:15-16.



We came upon two headlines in recent weeks. One dealt with the panoply and pomp of war. There was considerable praise lavished upon the commander of an expedition. This commander had cleverly vanquished his foes. The other was a graph from Vatican City to the effect that the beatification processes in regard to two heroic souls were proceeding favorably. The world was and is stressing the law of might; the Church was and is concerned with the sanctification of the individual. We do not point out sufficiently to the young this solemn fact. We do not hammer home as we should in sermons, novels, and plays that there is a deep, deep canyon between the standards of the world and those of heaven.

The Church, therefore, in telling us of man's great dignity admonishes us that only then is he great when he is little — when he refers all things to God. And to make us more and more convinced of this fact, the humility and self-abasement of the angels are presented to us at every turn in the road.

Take the captivity of St. Peter as an illustration. There is no doubt that Herod intended to kill him and, carefully and shrewdly, he laid his plans. These succeeded only too well, and the prince of the apostles was soon behind prison bars. Even at this point, Herod's vigilance did not relax. Peter was chained to two soldiers and there were jailers guarding the prison doors. Herod was taking no chances. His followers, even if they tried to deliver him would not be able to do so. A sword thrust from one of his guards would do Peter to death.

But Herod, like the vast majority of egomaniacs, had left out of his calculations all thought of the supernatural. The newly founded Church needed the services of the



humble Peter. As a consequence, its members prayed fervently and without intermission for the deliverance and the safety of their leader. Then, in the darkness of night, a miracle occurs. An angel appears, strikes off the detaining fetters, and commands the apostle to follow him. Although in a daze over the turn of events, he does as he is told. Soon the angel disappears. It is then that Peter's confidence and hope return. Immediately he gives full credit to God as the giver of all good gifts. For had not God broken the shackles that had bound him? "And Peter, coming to himself, said: 'Now I know in very deed, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.'"<sup>21</sup>

In this hour of dire need, we assuredly need the power of the angels to turn the scales in our favor. And the best petition in the sight of God is a stainless mode of life. These heavenly spirits are mostly interested in the humble and the contrite of heart.

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<sup>21</sup> Acts 12:11.

## Chapter IV

### THE SILENCE OF THE ANGELS

The various kingdoms which God brought into being silently speak to us of His greatness and omnipotence. There are sermons in stones for anyone who desires to read them. A snow-crowned mountaintop reminds us of a majestic cathedral, pointing always toward the skies. And the planets lose not one precious moment in speaking of God. Their works proclaim the Creator's worth. "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands."<sup>1</sup>

The vegetable kingdom, which is like to God in being and in life, presents a similar lesson of silence and repose. Without noise or commotion the sheaves of grain develop and grow to full maturity. Without blare of trumpet the cohorts of spring appear in the land; countless blossoms foretell the rich harvest of fruit and of flowers which soon become a reality. Silently innumerable petals of roses, of violets, and of various other flowers are crushed, and from these are distilled different essences of exquisite perfume. Nature indeed loves silence.

The same is true of many an instrument made by the ingenuity of man. In perfect repose the sundial goes about

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 18:2.

its allotted task of informing people of the time of day. Noiselessly the sextant performs its task; the same is true of the blackboards we used at school, of the telescope, the microscope, and hundreds of other inventions.

But ascend a step higher. Consider man, the ruler of this terrestrial paradise. There are those who indite learned volumes and expect thereby to have their names emblazoned on Fame's perishable scroll. But there are a select few who belong to the elite of the universe. They shock the world into sanity by being books rather than by writing them.

Now the influence of a book — either for good or ill — is primarily a silent one. Though dumb, a book continues to speak; and the greater number of copies struck from the press and placed in circulation multiplies likewise the volume in question. We have had in this vale of tears many a noble and heroic person who chose rather to be a book. He had no desire to write one. Such souls, though some were obliged to mingle constantly with poor, suffering humanity, had nevertheless a far-off, dreamy look in their eyes. Always they realized that they had not here a lasting city and that the words of the poet of the South were poignantly true.

Hearts that are great beat never loud,  
They muffle their music when they come;  
They hurry away from the thronging crowd  
With bended brows and lips half dumb,

And the world looks on and mutters — "Proud."  
But when great hearts have passed away  
Men gather in awe and kiss their shroud,  
And in love they kneel around their clay.



Hearts that are great are always lone,  
They never will manifest their best;  
Their greatest greatness is unknown —  
Earth knows a little — God, the rest.

Our Divine Lord never wrote a book, but His life was one. A perfect symphony it was, a masterpiece, a fountain of living water quenching the quenchless yearnings of mankind until the sundial of life ceases to perform.

Christ's life was the acme of perfection; because He is divine as well as human, more words have been written about Jesus of Nazareth than about any other individual. There is some hope for the human race as long as the Bible remains a best seller in the land.

#### 1. HUMBLE THYSELF

If, then, Christ, who took upon Himself our human nature and became our Model and Guide; if He, as the most exalted One of our race, loved solitude and silence, if He spent days and even nights in the mountains apart from the crowd, if He frequently cautioned us about the dangers arising from disorders of the tongue — is it not logical to suppose that those creatures called angels have an intense love for repose and contemplation. Of course such is the case. If man is inclined toward peace and solitude, is it not reasonable to conclude that those in a higher and more exclusive sphere of being are endowed with a greater and deeper longing to commune with the Creator? In point of fact, the silence of the angels is something so elevating, so stupendous, and breath taking that weeks and years could be spent profitably in meditating on it.

Indeed the silence of the angels is a topic for contempla-

tion rather than discussion. Yet one phase of the subject should be stressed: the silence of the angels is not negative; it is positive, dynamic, thrilling.

Have you ever been in a group where a problem of importance happened to be under consideration? Naturally you have; for it is a common occurrence to the majority of people. Of the number there assembled possibly two persons say never a word. One reminds you of a vacuum. He contributes nothing toward a happy solution. Worse still, there seems to exude from him a creeping, dampening fog which confuses the issues at stake. So cynical is he that you experience an instinctive feeling of revulsion. You would like to fight against him.

The other personage, while silent too, is part and parcel of all that goes on. His smile of approval means more to that group than the most eloquent outbursts of oratory. The flash of his eyes mows down the opposition more effectively than a machine gun. Here is one who wins the day though he never so much as opens his mouth. Here, in short, is a leader — one to fight for, and not against.

Such an example may serve to illustrate the quiet assiduity of the angelic spirits as they go about the tasks assigned them with only one end in view: to serve and magnify the God who created them. We who still live on earth but who desire to become more and more like unto these heavenly creatures know full well that there is one big obstacle which impedes us on our journey upward. Jealousy is the stone which must be thrown back before our Saviour comes forth from the tomb. And — be it remembered — the angels were there on that glorious morning when the stone was rolled away. Conse-



quently it has always appeared to me as peculiarly appropriate to petition the angels to rid us of this despicable vice, jealousy.

There are those who stoutly affirm that they have not a jealous bone in their bodies. There are not a few who believe that such is the case — that many favored souls are perfectly exempt from the ravages of this devastating vice. Now, while rivalry in matters of interest or affection may not be obviously noticeable in some persons, such a condition does not prove that jealousy is entirely absent. By no means. We are all poor, banished children of Eve; and not infrequently jealousy is strongly entrenched in those souls who appear to be entirely free from it.

But whether jealousy is above or below the surface, there are few to dispute its immense power in the world today. In high and in low places it holds sway. The poor as well as the rich are contaminated by it; the uneducated as well as the educated. One might imagine that a broad, liberal education would tend to make people broad and liberal and tolerant, but oftentimes such is not the case. They still remain parochial in their views, suspicious of others, jealous of their successes.

A French writer once said quite truly, "Jealousy is not love but self-love." This possibly explains the presence of the evil among those who are dedicated to lives of holiness and sanctity. No spectacle is quite so disheartening as to witness jealousy in monasteries, convents, and in high ecclesiastical quarters. It destroys enthusiasm, initiative, and desire for perfection. It transforms those who are unlucky enough to be present at such scenes from optimists into cynics of the hardest type. But, you will contend, such



a course is not logical. People should know better than to be turned aside from their spiritual quest just because some priest, or nun, or bishop scandalized them by petty acts of jealousy.

But let us frankly remark that, although the ordinary person in the street may have had a complete course in logic, it does not follow necessarily that he will apply it practically to himself when the need arises. Not infrequently his spirits are dampened by what he sees. He begins to look down upon those to whom he should look up. His soul shrivels up. His ardor slackens and, finally, he decides that, if Christians act in so mean a manner toward one another, then he, for one, does not wish to associate any more with them. As a consequence, we know such an individual as a fallen-away Catholic. A strange, unhappy person is he, neither fish nor flesh; and he became such not because of some big moral upheaval on the part of clergy or laity, but solely because of frequent rivalries, doubts, and suspicions among those who should have been above such smallness.

Listen! There was once a king who had accomplished much for his people. But he became arrogant and disobedient. Then came the shepherd boy David who went forth and slew the giant Goliath. After this courageous action, the women came forth from the towns and cities, singing and playing a new song of gratitude: "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands."<sup>2</sup> But the comparison irked Saul, and from that day he thought no more about his obligations to his Creator. He had one obsession, to put David to death.

Those words echoed and re-echoed as a satanic lullaby

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 18:7.

in the king's heart until the mere sight of the shepherd boy drove Saul to further paroxysms of anger and of hatred. Let no one say that we are exaggerating the evil. It would be difficult to do so. Here is one of the many classical examples where man, in striving to down his fellow man, neglects the Creator. Saul slew his thousands and David his ten thousands. This preacher converted three hundred; this one three thousand. This nun taught her class regularly for twenty-five years; God gave another sister fifty years; as a result the latter is envied by the former. It is the old, old story: Saul slew his thousands and David his ten thousands!

In the physical world, nature repairs itself to a considerable extent. The flood waters at least subside, the sun appears, and the meadows take on once more their coat of green. But look there by the bank of the river and see the uprooted trees! Never again shall they put forth verdant leaves, or house a nest of robins in their branches. They have lost contact with the soil. They are dead.

In the spiritual world, too, there is a mending process constantly at work. We are surrounded by a veritable ocean of graces, the mercy of God being above all His works. When the Word was made flesh and dwelt in our midst, the angels sang a hymn of joy to men of good will. But besides peace and contentment on earth, there is gladness likewise in heaven. The Master lets us in on a little secret. He tells us that there is more happiness in heaven over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just who need not penance. Since joy and love are practically synonymous from a spiritual viewpoint, and since those in heaven love the Creator with all the strength of their



being, it is not unusual to suppose that the denizens of that glorious home of ours are treated to many a touching glimpse of the prodigal's return.

Not so very long ago a similar scene unreeled itself like a film before our view. It occurred in the corridor of a large hospital. The sister at the desk was extremely courteous. In taking the brief data required on entrance, she kindly asked: "Your religion, please?" The man pursed his lips in hatred and in a loud voice screeched: "None!" An observer could easily conclude that the invalid was too vehement in his denial — that he protested too much. "Very well," replied the nun in gentle tones, "we shall put you down as a Christian."

A few weeks later when two operations were over and had proved successful, the one on his body and the other on his immortal soul, the patient called the nun at the desk to his room. Almost immediately he began: "Sister, did you take me for a Catholic on the day I was admitted?"

"I rather suspected it," replied the nun. "You were so perturbed, so dogmatic in the way you denied it."

"Well, sister," resumed the patient, "I was under the impression that I hated the Church. On the day I was taken seriously ill, while motoring through your town, an ungovernable rage obsessed me when the attending surgeon told me that your hospital was the only one where he would operate on me. You are aware of the rest of my story. You recognized my ungentlemanly conduct. My firm determination was to keep all at a safe distance, for in former years I had been sorely wounded by would-be Catholics. This resolution of mine soon melted under the warmth of the reception accorded me, a stranger. Will you



please forgive my rudeness, dear sister? I love the old Church dearly. The padre brought me Holy Communion this morning."

"Oh, I'm so glad," exclaimed the good sister as the interview came to an end and she left the room.

"So glad!" So were the inhabitants of that true fatherland of ours — heaven. They, too, rejoiced with an exceedingly great joy.

A powerful motive, therefore, urging us to eradicate all jealousy from the heart, is the happiness which such actions bring to the angels and saints in heaven. When we return from a journey, no matter how short it may be, there are little remembrances for those at home. And these gifts are selected and conferred according to the particular desires of the persons on whom they are bestowed. This present is suitable for one individual; and that one for another.

But when there is question of a present for the angels, there is little difficulty in discovering an appropriate one. To conquer jealousy with all its devious tentacles is an arduous task, to be sure, but it is a gallant project too, since real liberty stems from conquest of self. Such a decision brings intense happiness to the angels in heaven. These glorious creatures, seeing always the face of God, are, as a consequence, wholly enamored of His infinite beauty. Therefore, they detest and abhor the baneful effects of jealousy. They have watched its slimy trail as it goes from one house to another, from city to city, from monastery to monastery. Full well they know the spiritual ruin and devastation it has wrought. Because of it, Christian men and women have forgotten their God and occupied themselves in petty, vindictive concerns. "Saul slew his thousands and David his ten thousands." Because

of it, brides of Christ have neglected the lonely Christ and given their thoughts and their time to mundane affairs. Because of it, priests and even bishops have come down from Mount Thabor and neglected the interests of Him whom they have vowed *faithfully* to serve until death.

More constant than the North Star, these hosts of heaven have their thoughts riveted on the Creator. They are not distracted by passing events as we are, and the monster of jealousy which causes creatures to forget their God is quite naturally detested by them.

For those generous souls, therefore, who wish to rid themselves of this foul fiend, the angels are special advocates before the throne of the Almighty. The angels also enlighten such souls in a particular manner, discovering to them in dark and unlooked-for places the vestigia of this far-reaching monster. They warn against the approach of jealousy; they assist us to conquer it thoroughly.

Besides the joy which is experienced by the angels of God over the return of those who have wandered away because of jealousy, there is, alas, another scene upon which to dwell: we must recall that picture of the upturned trees which never again take root after the storm has passed. Through the inscrutable providence of God there are, unfortunately, some few people who, when once scandalized, never return, as the prodigal, to their Father's home. Even in the case of such persons the outlook is not hopeless. It may be that such individuals have fallen away from the road of rectitude because of our misconduct, our worldly mode of life. Admitting such to be the case, our trust must always be in the mercy of Him whose mercy is infinite. By our pleadings, and our penances, too, the anger of the Almighty can be placated. If we beg with



sufficient fervor and perseverance, rest assured that our yearnings will not be in vain. The good God will eventually hear them, and grant our requests.

The angels are marvelously fitted for such a task. You possibly remember that episode in the Old Testament where the wife of Abraham, because of her harshness, drove out Agar, the handmaid. The woman was bearing a child and yet she tramped on and on into the wilderness. Fatigued in body and mind, Agar sat down by a fountain of water. Here an angel of the Lord appeared to the distressed soul and asked her: "Agar, handmaid of Sarai, whence comest thou? and, whither goest thou?"

"I flee from the face of Sarai, my mistress," replied Agar. Then the angel of the Lord said to her: "Return to thy mistress, and humble thyself under her hand."<sup>3</sup> And Agar dutifully complied with the request of the angel.

## 2. THE CONVERSATION OF ANGELS

+ Eminent theologians tell us that the angels are mainly concerned in carrying out the wishes of the Creator, and still they find time to converse among themselves. But on what topics do they dwell? Are they interested in frivolous and inconsequential affairs? Do they gossip about matters not pertaining to themselves?

+ It was the beloved Canon Sheehan who once remarked that the writer who could put into attractive English the works of the erudite Jesuit Suarez would do much for the real education of mankind. The subject of which we speak is a case in point. By simple, solid reasoning Suarez shows us that the angels communicate one with another but —

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<sup>3</sup> Gen. 16:8-9.



be it emphasized — about those things which pertain to their office.

There is a profitable lesson for us in the efficiency which the angels display in serving God. Frequently we rave about the way the Creator and His angels are left out of our business and social life. As a general rule, our protests are sane ones. Seldom, however, do we consider a more vital problem — a situation that is closer to the fountainhead of the evil: we mean the fact that, as Christian men and women, we have not restored God to His proper niche in our daily lives. Watch a group of doctors as they convene for a regular meeting. There is keen interest, wholesome enthusiasm, and a desire to make solid progress in their profession.

Even apart from formal meetings you oftentimes come upon them in hospital corridors where some renowned surgeon has just performed an operation out of the ordinary. These medicos, although other duties claimed their attention, thought it part of their calling to be present in surgery and to study carefully the great man's technique. On other occasions they will consult as to the wisest course to be followed in the treatment of specific cases. Wherever such medicos may be found, it is a rather safe bet to wager that their conversation bears directly or indirectly on the profession they have adopted as their own. In these days the medical fraternity is criticized in many respects. We are told that they use slipshod methods; that they experiment with human lives; that they consider before all else financial success. We are not contending that doctors are perfect. Being human, they are liable to possess a fair sprinkling of the faults

which accompany this nature of ours. But from experience we may likewise assert that there are few medical men not interested in their profession.

Now let us take an equal number of priests or nuns who are in duty bound to tend toward perfection — who are supposed to let their light shine among men — who should be as the salt of the earth. Having chosen at random this coterie, draw near and listen to their conversation. We fully understand that to theorize continually on spiritual matters is neither wholesome nor necessary. Frequently we talk best about God when we do not speak at all but demonstrate our love for Him by our actions. Nevertheless it is passing strange that those whose profession it is to know and serve the Creator should have so little time wherein to entertain Him. A novice who strives to talk frequently about our Lord is considered somewhat of an oddity. A little nun who gives up an hour of her sleep to the Lord is looked upon with suspicion. A zealous young priest who strives to lead an exemplary life is oftentimes made the butt of many a joke among clerical friends.

There is no denying that such conditions exist. The constructive thing for us to do is to bend all our forces to extirpate the evil. It is prevalent in the world and in the cloister. And the times are such that we must be violently for Christ lest it should happen we eventually come to be violent haters of Christ. Warring nations centered their attention on a large *V* for victory. But real victory follows the footsteps of those who are violently for Christ. Here is the most important *V* in all the world.

Consider the glorious example of Pierre Toussaint, who was quite a conspicuous figure in the life of New York during the early days of the past century. Even though



this colored man had come from Haiti as a slave servant in the family of Jean Berard, he became most active and honored in his work for the faith. At Pierre's funeral Mass his pastor pronounced these words:

"There were few left among the clergy superior to him in zeal and devotion to the Church and for the glory of God. Among the laymen not one." Here indeed is a eulogy difficult to surpass.

Toussaint, because of his profession as a fashionable hairdresser, had many an opportunity to explain to the society girls of his day just what the Catholic Church teaches and what it does not teach. Historical documents and letters prove how faithfully he fulfilled his task as an apologist. He possessed a winsome personality and a deftness of touch at turning a phrase in favor of the Church as well as turning a curl to suit to perfection a customer's taste. No one will ever know his innumerable acts of charity. He was loved and admired by all irrespective of their race or creed. Miss E. F. Cary, of Boston, a convert, says: "When I was young I used to hear Protestants speak with reverence of two Catholics, the great Fénelon and the humble Toussaint, and it made a great impression on my mind."

Not infrequently we are told of members of various sects who make themselves obnoxious by their bold, harsh manner in visiting homes and playing religious records, whether the inmates wish it or not. Such a procedure is not calculated to win converts permanently; nor should it be tolerated, since it conflicts with our ideas of complete freedom of worship. Usually, however, Catholics go to the other extreme. We are very reticent about presenting the doctrines of the Church to outsiders. A man and his



wife, now happily at home as Catholics, mentioned that for three years they waited for a Catholic family who lived close by to invite them to Church. But the invitation never came, and the people in question were under the impression that only those who were actually Catholics could attend services.

This instance where the conversion of two earnest seekers was unnecessarily delayed because of the apathy of Catholics is by no means a solitary one. It happens frequently, and frequently souls are lost because of such carelessness. How much better would it be if we recalled to mind that Christians are supposed to be fishermen, indefatigable anglers for souls; our conduct then invariably would be attractive, enticing those about us to a higher and more perfect way of life, and the words we utter would revolve mainly about the one thing essential — Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

### 3. THE ELOQUENCE OF SILENCE

The psychology of silence is so stupendous, so far reaching, so sublime that it is only when we break it by inordinate chatter that its true worth and beauty is recognized.

What then is the answer? Must we all tramp off to the desert to become hermits? No, indeed! The El Dorado of silence is not circumscribed, not confined to any particular locality. Even down among the crowds, down in the canyons of our large cities, there are desert spots where one may go apart from the noise and bustle of the world and commune with the Creator. And this demonstrates clearly that silence is a gift which resides within the heart and not merely in an external appendage.

Study carefully the actions of those celestial spirits who visited this earth of ours and conversed with men. How few, how cautious were their words!

These celestial messengers efficiently perform the work they are commanded to accomplish and then, without more ado, return to heaven. In the matter of talking they are our exemplars. When God's glory or the neighbors' good is at stake we should speak out calmly, charitably, briefly, then retire into that inner citadel of the soul, there to commune with our Maker.

Many religious men and women do not esteem silence at its true worth. They forget that the finest and most awe-inspiring of created things speak to us silently. Poems written on paper that cannot speak, and yet they bring joy, happiness, and consolation to all who read them. The poet *par excellence* is our Father in heaven. He has etched His verses everywhere.

Just consider for a moment the flowers that abound on this globe. There are rare and exotic buds, and there are those uncommonly common ones such as geraniums, fuchsias, and lilacs. The city of Rochester has a pageant each spring to honor the lilac. Frequently it happens that showers fall the night preceeding the lilac festival and then the scene is overpowering in its beauty, and the air is filled with the delicate aroma of the lilac. These impressions of beauty steal upon us silently. The mineral kingdom, too, is clothed in complete silence. Look aloft at the heavens and see how noiselessly the planets execute their tasks. Watch the sun and the moon rise and set without blare of trumpet and then — then take home to yourself the preciousness of this virtue.

But there is another reason why silence is not properly



appreciated by us: we are escapists, forever striving to get away from present difficulties. *The Hound of Heaven*, although an allegory, illustrates how closely embedded is this escapism in our human nature.

Modern inventions and conveniences have changed the tempo of life from *andante* to *allegro*. We like our automobiles to move at an accelerated speed. We live on excitement; we crave change. One group rushes to the seashore, another is bound for the mountains; and both groups are disgusted with life, filled to the full with boredom and ennui.

For such a mode of existence, which really is not living, the piper must be paid. People whose nerves are ragged and on edge add to their miseries by increasing the hypertension. They listen continually to the blah-blah of the radio just as an inveterate toper, in seeking to cure himself of alcoholism, will taper off by taking just one more drink. The result is a turning away from God — a diffusion of spirit which renders intimate union with our Maker extremely difficult, if not actually impossible.

We see the outcome of this rejection in the world about us. The wars and the dismemberments of nations which we witnessed obviously are a scourge from a most merciful Father who loves us dearly. The chronicles we read in the Old Testament have a pleasing monotony about them. They tell us of the immense patience of the Almighty despite the sins and excesses of His chosen people. In the Old Testament one perceives as clearly as he knows his own existence that cause and effect are closely connected — that war, famine, and destruction follow upon disobedience to the laws of God. No sooner do the Jewish people fall into idolatry than the anger



of God falls upon them until, like repentant children, they return once more to the feet of their Creator.

This ebb and flow, the systole and diastole of sinning and the chastisements following upon sin, run through the Old Testament as a theme song is woven into a music opus. As in all plays, so too in the Bible, one is aware of a gradual hastening toward the climax. This comes with dramatic intensity when the Jews blindly refuse to accept the eternal Son of God; and as a consequence they are cast aside. There are lengths beyond which people cannot go without falling into the sin of presumption.

Some of the Jews, however, possessed a secret which we consider old fashioned, out of date, archaic. When the hand of God fell heavily upon them, they turned to Him in abject humility. The Book of Job is filled with such passages; "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my crimes and offences."<sup>4</sup> "And if I be wicked, woe unto me: and if just, I shall not lift up my head, being filled with affliction and misery."<sup>5</sup>

In the New Testament, however, a wider horizon greets our view. The coming of Christ — His passion and death affect us so deeply, so poignantly, that the idea of continuing to sin and offend Him becomes intolerable. Added to humility for past mistakes, there is confidence, hope, and love. In the New Testament, we meet with love, Incarnate Love, unspeakable and everlasting. We receive a new orientation. We perceive the utter futility of persisting in slapping a person on the cheek without cause, especially a divine Person who refuses to be insulted by our childish tantrums.

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<sup>4</sup> Job 13:23.

<sup>5</sup> Job 10:15.

Faced, therefore, with the problem of reforming our lives, of building anew this immortal temple of ours, immediately certain difficulties present themselves. We need, at the beginning, a blueprint, a plan of action. As we meditate upon the obstacles which confront us, they become smaller and smaller, like blocks of ice that are allowed to remain in the sun. That we may recognize our spiritual rejuvenation, we need a chance to think over the matter thoroughly in peace and quiet.

Some years ago we recall reading an article by a famous novelist. This energetic woman, who had written some thirty or more detective stories, revealed her rather unusual technique. She happened to be quite proficient at knitting. Her mind, in fact, seemed at its best as she sat in a rocking chair before an open fire, and labored diligently with her knitting needles and yarn. While thus employed, she constructed every paragraph and chapter in her mind, nor did she leave off this blueprinting until the final chapter had been planned.

More important now than ever before in balancing the scales of life are peace and mental quiet. We discover here a salutary antidote for the evils of the day. "With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in his heart."<sup>6</sup> In silence and meditation we visualize the entire picture, perceiving our own weaknesses and the stupendous forces of evil arrayed against us. Then it is that instinctively we turn to the angels, begging their assistance, asking them to turn the battle in our favor.

They do this by accentuating the need of silence. Study the conduct of the various warring nations. All of them

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<sup>6</sup> Jer. 12:11.



made use of the radio, but in times of danger that invention was silent, for to use it then would be tantamount to courting disaster. Likewise a person aspiring toward a higher degree of perfection is very circumspect while walking along life's highway. Dangers abound. Enemies confront him from every side. The prudent method is not to let the enemy know that we are in the vicinity at all.

Silence, however, must not be something constrained and artificial. It should proceed from a deep desire continually to commune with God even in the midst of the world. Pagans as well as Christians have recognized the preciousness of it. "Silence," remarks Confucius, "is a true friend who never betrays." "By silence," writes the philosopher Zeno, "I hear other men's imperfections and conceal my own." Homer speaks of "the silence that speaks and the eloquence of eyes." The pages of Shakespeare are seasoned with good advice anent this virtue: "Give thy thoughts no tongue. . . . Silence is the perfect herald of joy. . . . Silence often of pure innocence persuades when speaking fails." The dour Carlyle is in his element when discoursing on the subject: "The nobleness of silence! The highest melody dwells only in silence — the sphere melody, the melody of health. The great silent man! Looking round on the noisy inanity of the world — words with little meaning, actions with little worth — one loves to reflect on the great Empire of Silence."

If, then, men of the world and even pagans perceive the benefits occurring from silence, is it not rather humiliating that we who are supposed to follow the silent Christ fail so often in this respect?

To reach the sphere of mental peace and quiet, aid from the angels is a dire need. Praying frequently to them, the



world becomes what it truly is — worldly. Christ hated it and we begin to show our contempt for it in a very positive manner: by holding ourselves prudently aloof from its snares and deceits. In the peace of soul which we possess, the blueprint of our spiritual edifice becomes plain, intelligible. We see exactly what is required of us.

Moreover a transformation takes place in our vacillating will. We find that we possess a weapon of steel like a Damascus blade; our endeavors are no longer ineffectual. We are now able to accomplish what before we vainly desired but never fulfilled.

Those heavenly soldiers are with us from on high and, by their strong silent assistance, we are no longer spending the time rocking backward and forward. We are traveling on and on to meet our Beloved among the everlasting hills.

## Chapter V

### THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

The thanes at the court of King Ethelbert, so we are told, knew not the goal of the swallow on leaving them, but the swallow did. Unerringly it winged its flight to the desired spot. The sun knows the place of its setting. Rivers travel on and on until they meet the sea. All things in nature bespeak direction. Man alone is woefully lacking on this point. The spectacle of befuddled human beings, running about aimlessly like imprisoned animals, once caused the inspired writer — if I mistake not — almost to imperil his own sense of direction when he sadly broke out with a query addressed to the Creator: “Hast Thou fashioned him in vain?”

We know full well that a question demands an answer — that is, such a question as this. Conscience, the history of religions, and the small penny catechism — all join in proclaiming that man is no exception to the rule. His destiny is broader and nobler than the course of the sun, or the flight of a bird.

Being conscious of such a sublime destination, is it not appallingly strange that adequate preparations are not made to provide for a safe journey? Those familiar with business methods are wont to draw up inventories of assets

and liabilities. If terms are requested, they would probably set down the well-paying business they have, their bank account, their automobile, and a dozen other inconsequential things they possess in smug self-complacency.

Even those whose task it is to instruct souls and lead them to a higher plane, whose vocation is a business *par excellence* — even they are sometimes afflicted by the lure of material matters. Years and years ago their mental attitude was well diagnosed by St. Augustine when he said: “The habit of the eyes is the supreme law of thinking.”

If, then, Augustine felt the need of uttering these words in a time of saintly hermits, priests, and lay folk, should we not repeat them, and repeat them, in an age which rivets its attention almost exclusively on material concerns and comforts? Assuredly so! In the midst of clashing aims, when men are striving for the possession of earth, there is great need to stress our spiritual heritage, to call attention to our partnership with God (for Christ is our Friend, our Lover, our Brother) and to popularize the doctrine of the Church on the angels. Heretofore our study has been mostly a theoretic one; now we must strive to have the angels enter intimately into our everyday lives.

## 1. OUR HEAVENLY PROTECTORS

Theologians discourse eloquently of the various ministries which the angels fulfill. They serve before the throne of the Almighty. “And ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.”<sup>1</sup> They act as messengers from God to man. They protect nations, cities, and towns. But the tender manifestation of the Creator’s care in appointing heavenly guardians to guide and protect us individ-

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<sup>1</sup> Dan. 7:10.



ually is just another indication of how He wishes to bind us still closer to Him by the cords of Adam, by the chains of Love Everlasting.)

Many of us who know and love the West are well aware how close to nature cowboys get. Possibly some of us can repeat a certain song of the range. It tells us that "It's a lonely trail when you're travelin' all alone." Cowhands, accustomed to be out in every kind of weather, acquire a peculiar power in protecting vast herds of cattle committed to them. While taking every precaution consonant with prudence, they also stand watch about their charges by day and by night, humming soothing words to dispel fear and render cattle at ease in new surroundings.

Now if brute beasts will bed quietly down for the night because of the magic of a human voice, should not human beings cast aside their cares and worries completely when thinking of God's infinite kindness in providing through life an escort for us? Man is definitely a social being. There are some who refuse to take a trip by themselves. If they do, the radio is on constantly so as to keep them in touch with other folk and in some small way bridge the lack of human companionship which they desire so much. Such persons in particular should reflect upon the cowboy's lament:

I would not mind life's trouble  
If I could only travel double.

[Actually all of us "travel double." We possess a heavenly companion who is with us in every vicissitude. "I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared."<sup>2</sup> The Church desires us to habituate ourselves

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<sup>2</sup> Exod. 23:20.

to this consoling doctrine; hence she has established many feasts to remind us of these heavenly friends. The month of October is set aside to stimulate our devotion to them and a special day is assigned to meditate in particular upon our holy guardian angels. A few simple thoughts on this interesting subject may arouse our admiration and love for the guardian angels.

The friends we make in life do not wholly satisfy us. Though still deeply attached to particular human beings, we readily recognize their defects. Occasionally we may even go so far as to comment upon them to others. They talk when we desire them to be silent. Their opinions do not dovetail with ours and, as a consequence, there are misunderstandings and quarrels. Many a time when we need their services, these are not available. They are out of town or perhaps entertaining visitors.

It is only when we make such comparisons that the boundlessness of God's love in providing each one of us with a heavenly protector, vividly comes home to us. Our guardian angels are not of the earth; they are from heaven. Conversation with them leads the soul to a knowledge and appreciation of the things of the spirit, since they themselves are pure spirits and inflamed with love of the Creator.

The life of Blessed Peter Faber exemplifies this contention. His days were cast in an age of religious conflict and strife. The sophisms of Luther had won many from the old faith and had aroused doubt and bewilderment in countless others. On his journeys across Germany, as indeed throughout his entire career, Faber was known for his simple childlike devotion to the angels. Before addressing an individual, it was his custom to whisper a brief



prayer to his guardian angel. Before giving a sermon he invoked the aid of the guardian angels of those assembled to hear his words. As he approached a town he recommended himself to the angels watching over it. Fully cognizant that he was a traveler on life's highway, Faber sought not protection from police or magistrates, but from the one appointed from all eternity by God to render it unto him — his guardian angel.

The fruitfulness of Faber's life, the numerous conversations he held with unbelievers, the many conversions which occurred wherever he went, the miracles of divine grace performed through his instrumentality — such achievements demonstrate the efficacy of devotion to our guardian angel. Peter Faber's life was, according to our months and years, a rather short one. He died at the age of forty; and yet "God's broom" (as he facetiously spoke of himself) had swept the dust of sin from hovels and from palaces; had fulfilled in a brief span what is seldom permitted a man twice his age to accomplish.

Our guardian angels have no eight-hour schedule or a forty-hour-a-week agreement. Like the Creator who knows no respite from His labors in our behalf, they, too, watch over us continuously. At all times we may call on them and expect succor and assistance. A consoling doctrine indeed; one that should fortify us against gloom and despair; one that should encourage us to emulate the example of the angels and spend our brief lives for others as they do so generously for us.

There would have been no Calvary had Christ thought of His own pleasure and comfort. "Having joy set before him, [He] endured the cross, despising the shame."<sup>3</sup> These

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<sup>3</sup> Heb. 12:2.



blessed creatures who wait upon us and watch over us are imbued with a Christlike forgetfulness of self. Our spiritual welfare is of paramount importance to them; other matters are of secondary concern.

It is here that an essential fact of sanctity shines forth: the need, namely, of ignoring self if we are ever to rise above self. The minerals spread across the surface of the earth, or hidden deep in particular localities, are not there for themselves, but for a higher being — man. The same is true of the vegetable and animal kingdoms: they aid mankind in properly subsisting and fulfilling his destiny. Our Divine Exemplar, Jesus Christ, did not travel a different road. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal."<sup>4</sup>

If, then, the Incarnate God advised us to go the limit where forgetfulness of self is concerned, it is only logical that the guardian angels should follow the road hallowed by the sacred footsteps of our Blessed Redeemer. "Behold the cross is all, and in dying to thyself all consists, and there is no other way to life and to true internal peace but the holy way of the cross and of daily mortifications." As our constant companions, the angels, understand perfectly the need of hardships and humiliations in our daily lives; yet let none of us conclude that such a condition produces gloom and despair. Quite the contrary.

Companionship literally means *com plus panis* — a mixing of bread, a working together for a higher and nobler end. This is attained when we labor, with the

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<sup>4</sup> John 12:24-25.

aid of our guardian angels, for our own and our neighbors' sanctification and for the spread of God's kingdom on earth.

It is truly amazing how many and how erroneous are the notions which arise about us like an irritating sand-storm, when we decide to throw in fully our lot with Christ. There is, at the outset, the false idea that actually we are surrendering to morbidity and despair. Such is not the case. Yet there are those who believe that, when a girl enters a convent, she spends the rest of her life pining for the comfort and excitement left behind; that automatically she becomes a victim of gloom and pessimism. No one should be dubbed an optimist or a pessimist who is a bona-fide Christian; for it is impossible to be a real follower of Christ and belong to either camp.

Why? For the simple reason that these two camps or groups represent extremes. Turning one's back on the neighbor in a fit of despondency is just as nefarious an act as deceitfully imagining that all is well and the neighbor needs no care whatever. Despair and presumption are both abhorrent in the sight of the Almighty. The peace, then, which surpasses all understanding is a combination of both elements. We go forth with hope in our hearts—but in fear and trembling also, lest perchance unsuspectingly we fall. We travel through the mad whirl and din of factories and machines because here is where, generally, we shall find the neighbor and—Christ loved to be with the children of men and we, as other Christs, follow in His footsteps, quietly, bravely, preserving at all cost our peace of soul.

One of the reasons why we have neglected to cultivate a tender devotion toward our guardian angel is simply



because we have gotten away from the signification of this devotion. We storm about the present condition of the world. We rave against Nazism, Communism, Fascism. But, in the ultimate analysis, such a procedure is wrong. It is unjust to place the entire blame on a whole set of people whom we sweepingly speak of as "the others," without pausing to consider how we personally are responsible for such a condition. Our guardian angels are true harbingers of peace and joy because they so enlighten us that we can see our personal sanctification as surpassing in importance all other matters. Furthermore, by their utter unselfishness in caring for us, lovingly they tempt us to follow their example and expend ourselves utterly in serving our neighbor.

Besides the false assumption that intimacy with our guardian angels engenders a certain pietistic melancholy, there are not a few who labor under the fallacy that close companionship with the angels necessitates the severance of earthly ties. Naturally, if it were our custom to consort with vicious persons and they perchance proved to be stumbling blocks in our spiritual advancement, there would be only one course open to us: we must choose between frail human beings and the one Person who loved us first and continues to love us and will love us until the end.

But excluding such circumstances, it cannot be reiterated too frequently that a normal and ordinate love of our fellow creatures is very acceptable to God and by no means distasteful to His Divine Majesty. Our holy faith is based on the assumption that, while there remain faith, hope, and charity, the greatest of all is charity, for, in thinking and working for the neighbor at the expense



of self, we are actually laboring for Christ who explicitly tells us that, whatsoever we do for the least of His little ones we do to Him.

As the Saviour's love of the neighbor is broader and more immense than the widest ocean, so, too, the guardian angels, as our companions and guides, inculcate toward the neighbor the widest kind of catholicity in thought and action. Man is a free agent. He may associate with those who are worse than beasts, habituating himself to act on a level lower than that of dumb animals; or he may, with that spark of divinity within his breast, soar to the gates of heaven, imitating the angels in the exemplary manner in which all the emotions are controlled, following them in their intense love for the Creator, becoming more and more like to them in their yearning for heavenly things.

The fork of the road is right here. We may follow either path. An old adage has it that we are usually as good or as bad as the companions with whom we travel. If we deliberately and perseveringly journey through life in company with the angels, in some strange and glorious manner we shall become like to them. Possibly we ourselves will not notice the transformation. But gradually it will come about, for no one can travel in the presence of his guardian angel without becoming angelic in thought, word, and action.

## 2. OUR STRONG COMPANION

Our guardian angel is not only a companion but a very powerful one at that.

Tumbleweeds are rather fascinating plants to watch. They stumble about wherever the wind drives them.

Once in a while they are blown against a window or a fence corner; and then their wanderings cease, unless a kindhearted farmer turns them loose again.

But the most interesting aspect of tumbleweeds is the fact that they cannot tumble about until they have died. Only then have they a kind of restricted *carte blanche* to roam around the prairies wherever the wind listeth.

Now our guardian angels are dead to self — completely. Their main desire is to praise and glorify their Creator. They are, moreover, pure spirits, unencumbered by bodily infirmities. Swifter than the swiftest arrow, faster than the fastest airplane, these heavenly helpers are able in the flash of an eyelash to perform actions which, according to our way of thinking, would require months and years to accomplish.

The description of the conversation between the Apostle Philip and the man who exercised such great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, verifies the contention that our guardian angel is not alone a companion but a very strong one too. First an order is given to Philip. "Arise," says the angel, "go towards the south, to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem into Gaza: this is desert."<sup>5</sup> Obediently the apostle fulfills the command and, as a result, he meets one filled with eagerness to join the Church. Through the designs of Providence and because of his prompt obedience to the voice of the angel, Philip is the instrument in the man's conversion, after the groundwork had been admirably prepared by the action of the Holy Ghost.

No sooner is the traveler baptized than the Spirit of the Lord takes Philip away. His work is accomplished

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<sup>5</sup> Acts 8:26.



there. Even the convert, though deprived of the apostle's companionship, nevertheless goes "on his way rejoicing." Philip found himself in Azotus where he began at once to travel through the towns and cities, preaching the Gospel of Christ.

The incident has its lesson for us: these heavenly beings patiently possess enormous power. At one moment a man of God is in this place; in another he finds himself hundreds of miles away.

As we grow older we frequently find ourselves in blind alleys. We are aware of our inability to solve the problems before us. Lawyers, medical men, nuns, and priests — all are apparently helpless under certain circumstances. It may be a refractory student who is impervious to appeals to his better nature, and who is not improved by various methods of punishment. The boy has not been guilty of any moral dereliction and still a clamor arises that he be peremptorily dismissed from school. A prudent disciplinarian, however, understands full well just what such a course means: it signifies defeat on the part of the school authorities, and it spells disgrace to the boy and his family.

But there is another avenue open: we really are not in a *cul de sac*. Though there may be no way open before us, there is a route for us upward. Instead of reprimands and verbal castigations, a spiritual remedy ought to be tried; for we are here dealing with a spiritual disease. Recourse should be had to prayer and to the boy's guardian angel. These supplications ought not to be perfunctory and routine but fervent, from the innermost depths of the heart.

You recall that dramatic narrative in the Book of Genesis where Jacob, in journeying back to the place God



had destined for him, comes within range of his brother's habitation. Esau was the older of the two sons and he had been deprived of his birthright by the trickery of Rebecca who favored the younger boy. Naturally Esau was deeply hurt by the whole affair. Now that the gentle Jacob was in his hands, Esau meant to have his revenge.

But mark Jacob's method of procedure. To begin, he takes every precaution to safeguard his own retinue. He divides them in such a manner that, if some of them should be killed, others might escape from the encounter. Next, he fervently asks the Creator to hear his petition. "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who saidst to me: Return to thy land and to the place of thy birth, and I will do well with thee, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of thy truth which thou hast fulfilled to thy servant. With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I return with two companies. Deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am greatly afraid of him: lest perhaps he come, and kill the mother with the children."<sup>6</sup>

Then Jacob uses simple human means to placate Esau. His servants are told to bring him presents of goats, calves, and camels. They are definitely reminded to address his brother with great respect and deference. Then it is that he remains alone, occupied with the things of God, wrestling till morning with an angel. "And when he saw that he could not overcome him, he [the angel] touched the sinew of his thigh, and forthwith it shrank. And he said to him: Let me go, for it is break of day. He answered: I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

"And he said: What is thy name? He answered: Jacob.

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<sup>6</sup> Gen. 32:9-11.

But he said: Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel: for if thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men? Jacob asked him, Tell me by what name art thou called? He answered: Why dost thou ask my name? And he blessed him in the same place.”<sup>7</sup>

We have spoken of the powerfulness of the angel guardian and possibly no episode exemplifies this strength as the above incident. Jacob wrestles with the angel, striving with greater and greater effort to obtain his petition. Then, suddenly, with the coming of dawn, the perseverance of Jacob is rewarded. The angel blesses him and disappears.

In this manner — and only in this manner — is God vanquished and the cohorts of the Almighty obliged to leave behind a blessing instead of a curse. Despite the infinite power of the Creator, even the Triune God and His angelic attendants may be conquered. Persistent prayer will win the day. The narrative of Jacob is one of many. Esau comes to meet him, but, instead of slaughtering Jacob and his retinue, he gallops along with the horsemen on a peaceful mission.

“Esau ran to meet his brother, and embraced him: and clasping him fast about the neck, and kissing him, wept.”<sup>8</sup> In a moment the clouds of fear and of doubt had vanished. The heart of Esau was softened toward his brother. Even the presents which Jacob had sent forward as a peace offering are not considered necessary by Esau. “And Esau said: What are the droves that I met? He answered: That I might find favor before my lord. But he said: I have

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<sup>7</sup> Gen. 32:24-29.

<sup>8</sup> Gen. 33:4.



plenty, my brother, keep what is thine for thyself.”<sup>9</sup>

But Jacob is determined that this new-found friendship with his brother Esau shall not again be disrupted. He sees to it that the relationship is cemented by a close union with God. “And take the blessing,” urges Jacob, “which I have brought thee, and which God hath given me, who giveth all things.”<sup>10</sup> And Esau acceded to his brother’s request, much amazed by Jacob’s earnestness in the matter.

Thus the day is won; and hatred and needless bloodshed are averted. The angelic one who would not even reveal his name has brought this about. Of a truth our guardian angels are powerful. Tremendously so!

### 3. GUARDIANS OF OUR SOULS

Besides being a companion to each of us, besides being tremendously powerful, our guardian angel is wholly concerned about our spiritual welfare, determined to use every legitimate means to bring us safely to our heavenly fatherland.

Those who are intimately acquainted with nature, quickly take on nature’s characteristics. They become shrewd and wary like the mother quail who would soon lose her bevy of young ones to voracious hawks were she not watchful. They see that the hare stays but a short time in the same place. When aroused by hounds or wolves, it has a number of sagacious means to reach its hiding place without mishap. They imitate the wild dove in its zigzag method of flying, making it extremely difficult for a hunter to shoot it while in flight.

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<sup>9</sup> Gen. 33:8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 33:11.



As nature protects the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest, so, too, an infinitely kind and intelligent Creator gives to human beings the graces they need to overcome the enemies of the soul. There is a conscience to warn them from moral dangers, there are the sacraments and all the adminicula which every Christian is taught to use in self-defense, and there is that glorious thrilling association with the guardian angel.

No one can ponder the words in the Book of Exodus without a deeper and broader knowledge of God's tremendous love for us, His unworthy creatures. Bear in mind that those were the days of mass migrations and the very name of the book signifies a "going out." Well, even in those unsettled times, man was protected by the Creator.

"Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him. But if thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee. And my angel shall go before thee."<sup>11</sup>

It is hardly possible for us to dwell upon the gracious solicitude of the Almighty in bestowing upon each one a guardian angel without arousing in our hearts a corresponding degree of gratitude and love. God has given us a protector. Why? To make sure that we are not lost while traveling on unknown roads and dangerous trails.

Perhaps the best way of showing our gratitude toward

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<sup>11</sup> Exod. 23:20-23.

the Creator is in following out those admonitions in Exodus. The first is: "Take notice of him."

+ We are oftentimes inclined to forget this blessed spirit. A number of years ago an entire class was convulsed with laughter over the prank of a disturber. Just because the teacher had commanded complete silence, a boy raised his hand.

"Well, now, what is your trouble?" sternly asked the teacher.

"Is it allowed for one to talk with his guardian angel?" questioned the mischievous youngster.

An avalanche of giggling and of laughter resulted from this remark; and the culprit was promptly sent to the office of the prefect of discipline.

"You tell me," he began, "that absolute silence was ordered. Then you arose and asked if it were permissible to talk to your guardian angel."

"That's right, Father," replied the troublemaker, who was an upright boy in many respects, and not given to lying.

"Then, after the hilarity subsided, you were sent down here. Is that right?"

"Yes, Father."

"Now let me ask you a question or two. Are you accustomed to converse frequently with your guardian angel?"

"No, Father, I am not."

"The query, therefore, had no foundation in fact. It was solely meant to disrupt discipline and provoke laughter."

"That's right, Father."

Of course, the culprit was punished. Though there was



no maliciousness in the lad, we vividly recall the verbal castigation he received because of his neglect and disregard for his guardian angel.

Here was a normal boy with ordinary religious tendencies. He was enrolled in a Catholic school; yet he had acquired no deep or fervent respect and devotion for his guardian angel. There is little use in asserting that such a one is an exception to the rule; for experience with the young teaches us the opposite: that those with a lively and practical love for their guardian angel are few and far between. But why? Usually this devotion is not sufficiently stressed in the home; or if it be dwelt upon in the family circle, it is generally only during the early years of a child's life. Then as the offspring grows older, those prayers to the guardian angel are relegated to the background. Small wonder that the world is cold and hard; that the hearts of men are obdurate and icy — because they are allowed to become so in youth. Love for the guardian angels can and should change the complexion of the entire world.

“Take notice of him!” Our piety and exercises of devotion toward the guardian angels should spring from the motive we have suggested. First of all, he is our companion, our protector, our guide; and such being the case, it is only natural that we should speak to him frequently; that we should put ourselves under his tutelage, and seek his aid whenever doubts or dangers assail us. “Take notice of him!” Besides morning and evening prayers, there is a very practical means of quickly reaching a high degree of sanctity. It is: frequently to take notice of our guardian angels during the day and to salute them reverently in the persons of those we meet and with whom we deal. To do



so is to reach definitely a higher altitude, to attain the goal of our desires. How frequently do we not hear the complaint among religious that their daily routine is monotonous; that they lead a life savoring of the world and its standards; that their spiritual existence is honey-combed by distractions and diffusion of spirit. While, in their humility, they may be exaggerating such deficiencies, there is however a modicum of truth in such remarks.

Though it may be a hard saying, it is nevertheless true that the generality of those dedicated to God do not attain to familiar intercourse with Him. That direct question which children so often ask of parents is applicable here: Why? The answer, too, is a direct one: we do not use the means which God has made available for our sanctification from the beginning of time. The Creator speaks of sending His angels to us. He has assigned them as our protectors, our guides, and our scouts along the devious paths of life. Since this appointment comes directly from the Creator, our confidence in the angels guardian should be correspondently great. He, the God of all greatness, does not neglect the small affairs of life. His solicitude descends to the individual; and in no kinder or more thoroughly thoughtful manner is His guardianship of us revealed than in the assurance He has given us of a guardian angel to keep us in all our ways.

We are accustomed to plead with the saints in heaven for favors, temporal or spiritual. All very well. But these are indirectly called upon to fulfill this office. We do not plead for a cessation of devotion to the saints of God. Far from it. But we do assert — as we have mentioned before — that the Creator has directly appointed an angel guardian to each one of us. He sees the face of the Almighty; he

knows intimately God's desires in our behalf; he is, in a word, our trusted guide.

The Almighty gives another command anent our guardian angel. It is not sufficient to "take notice of him." The Creator goes farther and enjoins us to "hear his voice." Just what is meant by this command?

Well, not only are we to be vividly aware of our guardian angel's presence, but we are urged to put his counsels into effect — to follow his advice in all things. A difficult task, you will say. Not when we consider the informant and the reasons back of the advice he gives. In the days when fortunes were quickly won or lost in Wall Street the person who had a thoroughly competent adviser was considered fortunate indeed. The counsel of such an individual was highly prized and — followed.

Now if we are accustomed so to act in order to protect our temporal interests, is it not the natural thing to expect that we should follow a similar procedure where the interests of our souls are at stake? In heeding the voice of our guardian angel we definitely use him as our counselor and guide. His advice should be acceptable in small things as well as large. In fact great acts or small acts are only relatively so, as St. Francis de Sales reminds us. It is the motive which renders an accomplishment gigantic or picayune, or, as the saint puts it, "doing little things with a strong desire to please God makes them really great."

"Hear his voice!" Especially should we do this in small matters, for life is made up of such. Great accomplishments seldom come our way. Consequently, when we have heard a neighbor's story a dozen times or more and our nerves are at the breaking point, "hear his voice" counseling patience and kindness, and hold on a wee bit

longer. Possibly the largest number of our sins and imperfections proceed from impatience, since the majority of those who follow Christ are usually of sanguine temperaments. Week in and week out, we confess the self-same faults of impatience, and, possibly, of anger and hatred.

Would it not be a grand idea if we really paid attention to the admonitions of our guardian angels and actually followed out the instructions they whisper in our ears?



## Chapter VI

### THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

An incidental lesson of World War II was that men and women are capable of a greater amount of toil than they had ever imagined previously. Demands for extra production on the home front were met cheerfully. Besides fulfilling their accustomed tasks over the usual period of time, many people worked four hours more at defense plants.

Naturally there was an added amount of weariness and fatigue during the first few days. But gradually this maladjustment disappeared, and those who before complained of not being able to sleep were rewarded by relaxed nerves and wholesome slumber. That destiny of man to earn his bread in the sweat of his face is not so terrible a state as many heretofore thought. There is a satisfaction beyond belief in grimy faces and caloused hands.

We have noticed, furthermore, another phenomenon: the advent of white-collared men into the sacrosanct factories and foundries of America. It has also punctured the notion that employers do not work — that they hire slaves to do their share. No, my friends. We all belong to the laboring class, the only difference is in the kind of labor we perform. The higher one ascends the ladder of pro-

ductivity, the more exciting, the more dangerous, the more exacting are the labors that confront him.

A certain person may have a "pull," and travel up to a definite height. But beyond that mediocre ascent "pull" cannot go. He bows to "push" who keeps on journeying upward. In a word, people are now returning to what was once a common belief: Nothing is obtained without toil.

Not so very long ago a student mentioned that he had no homework assigned him. Upon investigation, it transpired that the teacher had apportioned plenty of home problems for each student in the class. Confronted by such evidence the lad openly admitted it to be true, but contended that it is a waste of time to study outside of school hours.

"Why do you assume such an attitude?" questioned his older brother.

"Well," replied the younger lad, "look at all the animals. They are not obliged to study and practice as human beings do."

"Name but one who does not study and work and — I'll give you a dollar."

Now the boy was in dire need of extra money, so he said: "An elephant."

"A young elephant has a number of things to learn," returned the older brother. "Let us just mention one — swimming. Explorers have observed mother elephants giving swimming lessons to her young. First she demonstrates to her offspring how to travel in water. Then she stands on the bank and watches the young one's first ineffectual attempts to swim. If her calf does not perform properly, the mother wades in and corrects the blunder."

By this time the would-be student was quite interested

in such an absorbing game. "How about a bear?" he asked.

"The bear cub has a strict teacher and a rigid disciplinarian. The mother instructs it on how to travel through dense forests, how to climb trees, and ways and means of obtaining food."

"The beaver?"

"Oh, now! You certainly are in a muddle. What an example of industry is the busy beaver! Watch one mother beaver cutting down a tree. She gnaws off the bark, trims off the limbs, and, all the time, her little ones are imitating her. Some of our most prominent engineers, who have constructed gigantic dams, have obtained many a lesson from the beavers. In fact, all animate creatures have lessons to learn. Are you alone to be the exception?"

The lad was touched by the solicitude and earnestness of his older brother. His folk, he now realizes, were deeply interested in him; they expected him to make good while being good. He would do just that. The older brother's approach had met with success.

Besides intense activity and toil in the world about us, there is also an extraordinary degree of order and synchronization. As among human beings, nature, too, has its daily schedule, its day shift, its graveyard, and its swing shift. But why — one may ask, do we speak of the incessant toil in nature and among people in a book on the angels? The answer is simple: recently millions of men were warring one against another. Millions of others back of the combat zone were helping give our soldiers everything they need for victory.

Yet victory — in the ultimate analysis of things — is just a material triumph; while a moral success or a



cowardly failure on the part of the individual brings into play a far vaster array of opposing forces. Now you comprehend in a vague, imperfect manner the value of one immortal soul; now you understand only in part those words of St. Paul: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and the powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places."<sup>1</sup> Now you see as in a glass darkly the stupendous and nefarious phalanxes we must engage and overcome. Now the need of a heavenly general is obvious.

### 1. OUR ELDER BROTHERS

We Americans, though outwardly professing ourselves as democratic, are decidedly a class-conscious nation. The untouchables of India strike a tender cord in our hearts. We pity in fact that caste-ridden country. And, at the same time, we avidly seek alliances with the scions of European nobility, never considering for a moment the inconsistency of the whole affair.

Now the angels are our elder brothers, the more prominent and more illustrious of our family tree. Brothers! You question incredulously. Yes, indeed. You recall that incident of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse when an angel spoke to him? "I fell down to adore before the feet of the angel. . . . And he said to me: 'See you do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets. . . . Adore God.' "<sup>2</sup> The infinite goodness of our Creator, and the exalted dignity of man unite in this fact: The Creator has bestowed a glorious ancestry upon

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. 6:12.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. 22:9.

us, the highest anyone could wish. We possess angels who belong to our own household.

Now members of a family are usually on close, intimate terms one with the other. Very well. The angels therefore should be treated by us in a warm, cordial manner, and not as total strangers. During the day we frequently chat with our parents, our brothers, and sisters in the flesh. But are we to admit that faith is so tenuous, so weak, that these brothers of a fairer and better land are to be excluded from the orbit of our thoughts? At a time when nations are striving for closer and closer bonds of unity, shall we be so ungrateful as to forget those spiritual and stronger ties which unite us with the angels? Men talk of military perimeters but — thank God! — that there are heavenly perimeters too — boundaries of thought where one may converse with God and His holy angels.

But, besides a simple, childlike friendship and knowledge of the angels, there is also required a strong desire to imitate their exalted virtues. We are creatures. As monkey sees, monkey does. If a neighbor buys a new gadget of some kind, we want one too. Should a companion strut about in an attractive suit of clothes, we have a strong penchant to wear a like outfit too.

This imitative desire, so deeply embedded in human nature, may be given full sway where it is a question of imitating the angels. It has been said that the bold road is the sure road. Only by resolutely attempting to follow in the footsteps of these angelic spirits may we expect to advance rapidly toward perfection. Our determination in this regard will be a quiet, hidden one. There are those who regularly raise the national emblem at their home for all to see. Such folk usually have the windows plastered



with insignia from various patriotic organizations. All well and good, but there is another kind of patriot not to be overlooked. This type has all the right proudly to hang a gold star from her polished window, yet she does not. She wears it in the innermost recesses of her heart.

Our efforts, then, to become better acquainted with the angels shall be along quiet, sequestered ways. No gaudy outward show shall we make, and yet, because of this strong interior outpouring of love and confidence toward our elder brothers, the progress made will be swifter and more complete.

With a deep realization of our worthlessness and sinfulness, we shall ascend on high and consider the generalissimo of the heavenly hosts — St. Michael. Here is one with a long military background. Long before this cosmos came into being the angels existed. Only when Lucifer and his satellites strove to change cosmos into chaos — only when they tried to set up disorder instead of order — only when Satan rebelled against the Creator, did Michael and his cohorts enter the fray. “And there was a great battle in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”<sup>3</sup>

St. John vividly pictures this battle of the angels before time began, and he likewise alludes to the tremendous conflict which shall occur when time shall be no more. Through the intervening centuries we glimpse a figure

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<sup>3</sup> Apoc. 12:7-9.



ever young and ever powerful — the Archangel Michael.

Even where no specific one is mentioned, the Fathers tell us that the angel referred to is Michael. "And he cast out Adam; and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."<sup>4</sup> He, too, is the angel through whom God published the Decalogue. The Fathers also remind us that it was Michael who prevented Balaam from reaching the conqueror Balac and cursing the Israelites.

For those who still cling to the myth that might makes right, the narrative has a pertinent lesson. When Balac first sent messengers to Balaam with their wily proposal, the prophet refused to listen to them. Balac, however, would not be denied; he sent nobles in even greater number. "For I am ready to honor thee," said Balac, "and will give thee whatsoever thou wilt: come and curse this people."<sup>5</sup> Though Balaam openly declared that if Balac gave him his house full of silver and gold he would not deviate from the way of righteousness, he seems, nevertheless, to have been somewhat intimidated by the conquerors.

The next morning when Balaam saddled his ass, and went with the nobles, an angel of the Lord stood in the way against Balaam. "The ass seeing the angel standing in the way with a drawn sword, turned herself out of the way, and went into the field. And when Balaam beat her, and had a mind to bring her again to the way, the angel stood in a narrow place between two walls, wherewith the vineyards were enclosed. And the ass seeing him,

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<sup>4</sup> Gen. 3:24.

<sup>5</sup> Num. 22:17.

thrust herself close to the wall, and bruised the foot of the rider. But he beat her again. And nevertheless the angel going on to a narrow place, where there was no way to turn aside either to the right hand or the left, stood to meet him. And when the ass saw the angel standing, she fell under the feet of the rider, who being angry beat her sides vehemently with a staff.

“And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said: What have I done to thee? Why strikest thou me, lo, now this third time? Balaam answered: Because thou hast deserved it, and hast served me ill: I would I had a sword that I might kill thee. The ass said: Am not I thy beast, on which thou hast been always accustomed to ride until this present day? Tell me if I ever did the like thing to thee? But he said: Never. Forthwith the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel standing in the way with a drawn sword, and he worshipped him falling flat on the ground.

“And the angel said to him: Why beatest thou thy ass these three times? I am come to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse, and contrary to me. And unless the ass had turned out of the way, giving place to me who stood against thee, I had slain thee, and she should have lived. Balaam said: I have sinned not knowing that thou didst stand against me: and now if it displease thee that I go, I will return! The angel said: Go with these men, and see thou speak no other thing than what I shall command thee.”<sup>6</sup>

In this event we clearly perceive how quickly and effectively Michael deals with one person. But turn to the Book of Kings. Here we see an immense army of Assyrians

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<sup>6</sup> Num. 22:28-35.



under the leadership of King Sennacherib approaching the very gates of Jerusalem. King Ezechias very wisely puts his trust not in the valiant soldiers manning the walls, but in God alone. Nevertheless it is difficult for a king to be unconcerned while a horde of attackers approach. The unconcern is increased as emissaries of Sennacherib speak directly to the Jewish soldiers defending the walls of Jerusalem. Their words remind us of the rosy promises extended to those in fear of servitude and death in European countries during the war.

“Do not hearken,” say they, “to Ezechias. For thus saith the king of the Assyrians: ‘Do with me that which is for your advantage and come out to me and every man of you shall eat of his own vineyard, and of his own fig tree: and you shall drink of your own cisterns, till I come and take you away to a land like to your own land, a fruitful land, and plentiful in wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olives, and oil and honey, and you shall live, and not die. Harken not to Ezechias who deceiveth you saying: The Lord will deliver us.’ ”<sup>7</sup>

Now Holy Scripture does not tell us if any among the Israelites threw down their arms and joined the Assyrians because of this beguiling offer. But this we do know: The Lord God Almighty rules over kings as well as their subjects. And whenever pride fills the heart of any monarch, he is bound to meet disaster.

In the interim, Ezechias spends not his time in fruitlessly bewailing his precarious lot. No. Honestly and humbly he seeks solace in prayer. His subjects are commanded to do likewise. After a time the Prophet Isaias comforts him, bringing a message from the Almighty:

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<sup>7</sup> 4 Kings 18:31-32.



"Wherefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of the Assyrians: He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow into it, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a trench about it. By the way that he came, he shall return: and into this city he shall not come, saith the Lord, and I will protect this city, and will save it for my own sake, and for David my servant's sake."

And now comes the denouement, suddenly and effectively. "And it came to pass that night an angel of the Lord came, and slew in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand." The aftermath is briefly stated, like a military communique from the battle front. "And Sennacherib king of the Assyrians departing went away."<sup>8</sup> A few days later he is slain by his sons.

We often hear over the radio and read in newspapers about a mythical figure of the old west — The Lone Ranger. Always he championed law and order; and the mere appearance of this masked rider of the plains struck terror and consternation into the hearts of evildoers.

Now Michael is no myth, and his flaming sword, too, is an actuality. His power and strength transcends the widest scope of the imagination. Richard Coeur de Lion was a warrior unrivaled in his day; Louis of France was a saint as well as a brave soldier; and Joan of Arc is devoutly remembered because she courageously drove the invader from her country. Or pass to other eras and recall the chivalric deeds of St. George, St. Theodore, St. Demetrius, St. Sergus, and others too numerous to mention. Nevertheless these valiant men and women, while in the flesh, usually dedicated themselves to a definite mission at a definite period in the history of the Church. Circum-

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<sup>8</sup> 4 Kings 19:32-36.

scribed and thwarted by the demands of the body, they could not accomplish — even had they so desired it — the multiple tasks entrusted to Michael and his heavenly cohorts.

But what are these assignments, you will ask. The first and principal work of Michael is to wage relentless warfare against Satan. The battle which he and his loyal adherents won in paradise does not mean the end of the conflict. With the ejection from heaven of Lucifer and his minions, those billions of empty thrones remain a challenge to both sides. The spoils of war ever remain the same: our immortal souls, for God does not deny to man the free exercise of his will. We have one therefore in charge of this tremendously important campaign who not only possesses a military background but who is intensively alive to Lucifer's methods of attack. With this in mind Michael (who is spoken of in Greek Liturgy as the "highest general") deploys his forces, shifts them as occasion demands, always on the alert to circumvent and defeat his ancient foe.

Frequently we read in the Old Testament of how wicked kings, abandoning themselves to idolatry, lived a year or two and then were slain. On the other hand, we discover rulers who reigned over a long period because their hearts were upright and they walked faithfully in the way of the Creator's commandments. Nor is nemesis to be avoided by the ordinary man who dares disobey the law of God. He, too, is slain, together with his comrades, when idolatry is committed.

The making of a graven image is not the only means of denying the sovereignty of God. Our modern civilization has invented many others; some of them so shrewdly de-



vised as to mislead, at times, even the just. An attractive man or woman may — and frequently does — come between a person and his Creator. As Americans we have been more than generous in aiding the starving peoples of Europe and Asia. This is on the credit side of the ledger. Yet, as individuals, the vast majority of us are hypocrites. We profess to be Christians and our actions are frequently below the level of pagans.

Let us not live in a fool's paradise, for God is not to be mocked forever. His patience has an end. And when one glances over a metropolitan newspaper and counts the number of divorces granted; the swift increase in unnatural crimes; the connivance of officialdom in the spreading of birth-control literature; the rising wave of juvenile delinquency; the unhealthful condition of courts where innocent people are oftentimes punished instead of the guilty; the mad rush for material gains, irrespective of the great numbers trampled upon in so acting — all these nefarious deeds (and countless others too numerous to mention) will bring upon us the vengeance of the Almighty, unless we quickly change our ways.

In conversing with public servants of either the state or the federal government whose avowed object is the annihilation of the home and all the fond memories connected with it, most of them will frankly admit that they are in such positions simply because of the attractive salary they draw and because of the prestige they enjoy in the community. They will likewise concede another point: that their work is mainly among ignorant aliens of large families. These, they contend, must be educated up to the normal American notion of what constitutes a family — two or three children. So this is the prevalent idea of what



education on such delicate matters means! And this, according to them, is "American civilization"! Pagans and savage tribesmen have a higher standard than they.

But while these moral saboteurs are, for the most part, individuals with weak wills who prefer comfort and an easy living to principle and righteousness, the ones higher up are usually fanatics on the subject. They have consumed diabolical volumes which convince them that overpopulation is the cause of all wars. And such individuals are as hardened as illogical, as diabolical as the books they have devoured. Here is one phase of the multiple phases with which Michael and his army wrestle.

As this illustrious warrior watched over the chosen people and, when occasion demanded it, purged them because of their sins; so, too, has this heavenly general guarded Christ's Church from its very birth. Even in the early centuries, Christians looked to Michael for guidance and protection, and never did they look in vain. The Roman Liturgy bestows a unique encomium on him. He is called "leader of the heavenly militia whom the angelic citizens so have honored."

Nor are the words mentioned above mere puffs of wind, as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. The Church venerates this heavenly patron not alone because of his exalted position and intrinsic worth, but likewise because the need of Michael's power and guidance is daily brought home to us. He is far, far above us. No doubt of this. He possesses strength beyond our wildest dreams. No doubt of this either. But — but he is our elder brother. He loves us and — we need his help, oh, so much!

## 2. STRENGTHENER OF OUR WILLS

This intrepid warrior, as we have seen, possesses unusual military prestige. He is thoroughly aware of the treacherous malice of our common foe. Full well he knows that where Lucifer is concerned, the battle is not fought according to a recognized code of conduct. The old west was the camping ground for many a notorious outlaw. And yet, hard and cold-blooded though these men were, they usually followed a definite standard of procedure. An adversary was generally accorded an even chance to defend himself. Not so with the devil's bid for our immortal soul. His way of ruining us is to probe the moral weakness of each individual, and then base his strategy for our everlasting downfall on these dents in character. Over and over again, Holy Scripture reminds us that our arch-enemy is a liar; that the truth is not in him; that he promises and never fulfills.

It behooves us, therefore, to walk circumspectly, as St. Paul admonishes us. We still perceive things through sensory organs. We still are weak morally and, at times, physically too. Consequently there is urgent need to place ourselves under the illustrious patronage of him whose special care is the sick and the dying. We refer, of course, to Archangel Michael.

From the earliest ages the curative powers of St. Michael were so well known that his interposition in the military affair of God's people was obscured for a time. These early Christians looked up to St. George, St. Mercurius, and other valiant martyrs as their military guardians, and gave to St. Michael the task of caring for the sick. Tradition tells us that right royally he did, and does,



his part. A medicinal spring bubbles forth where all the sick who bathed therein, invoking the Holy Trinity and St. Michael, were cured of their ailments. Probably the most famous springs were near Colossae in Phrygia which St. Michael is said to have drawn from a rock. Pagans diverted a stream against this sanctuary in order to destroy it. But the archangel split the rock by lightning, thereby giving a new bed to the stream and sanctified forever the waters coming from the gorge.

While St. Michael is deeply concerned over those in ill health; he is more especially occupied in fortifying our fluctuating wills, rendering them strong and in accord with God's desire. The incident of how he struck fear into the heart of Balaam, making him perfectly pliant to the Almighty's wishes, is typical of innumerable restorations of our human wills to their proper spheres of action; and only on the judgment day shall we understand how large a part St. Michael played in bringing about these moral miracles.

There is no denying the lack of will power in the world today. It is evident on all sides. We readily perceive the more perfect way of life. We approve of it; we long to walk along that exalted highway. Christ lovingly beckons us. But alas and alack! Habits of long standing and our own innate cowardice hold us back, as chains encompass a prisoner. We are held for no gain. And, in the spiritual life, to stand still is to fall back.

Two thoughts occur at the moment. One is to pray earnestly and unremittingly to St. Michael for aid. As he and his flaming sword turned imminent defeat into a decided victory in the olden days, so, too, a like change will take place in us through his glorious intercession. A



second suggestion is indeed an ancient bit of advice: to force ourselves to perform daily some repugnant act in order to discipline the will. Now there seems to be a veritable deluge of vitamin tablets on the market these days. "Eminent doctors," "distinguished scientists" (so we are informed) recommend this nostrum or that. Just one pill a day, they tell us, and we shall keep in good physical condition. Now if men and women, who labor strenuously and through long weary hours, see the need of keeping in fine fettle, is it too much to ask Christians to think also in terms of their moral well-being and daily exercise the will to conform with the divine Will?

### 3. PROTECTOR OF THE DYING

The multiple duties of St. Michael are concerned not alone with those who are ill, either morally or physically, but they extend to the dying also. As Michael was conspicuous for his gallantry and military prowess in that conflict with the devil when time was in its infancy; so, too, it is only natural for us to look for his protection as life comes to an end. At this dread hour the evil one makes use of all his cunning and deceit in order to capture our immortal souls. It is only right to suppose that Michael's courageous warriors will then be with us, since the mercy of God is above all His works. If He sends His angels to convoy the ship of our soul in life's morning, shall he neglect it when the sun is low in the west? A thousand, a million times, "No."

It is for this reason that we read: "He is the Prince of the souls brought to God." And in the Mass for the dead are the inspiring lines: "but may the holy standard-bearer

Michael lead them into the holy light, which Thou didst promise to Abraham and to his offspring of old."

What loyalty to the Almighty is seen in him who so suitably is named "Who Is Like to God"! And what concern and attachment to us from birth to judgment! Does not this unceasing toil on Michael's part for God's glory and our own salvation awaken some faint, far-off echoes in our breasts too? Verily it should. At no time are we permitted to straddle the fence, to be half Christian and half pagan. The Master's words are true yesterday, today, and forever. "He who is not with me is against me." The very word allegiance means a binding of ourselves to the law — in this instance, to the law of God.

Some months ago one of the "Quiz Kids" returned an answer to a disconsolate woman which is well worth repeating here. Our annual observance of Thanksgiving Day was fast approaching. The woman had lost her son in the war and, in her despondency, asked just what she had to be thankful for. The lad who was given the query hesitated a moment or two. Then he gave in a few words an entire sermon: "That lady," said he, "ought to give thanks for the existence of God!"

Almighty God's existence and His protection and care for us which stem from it should arouse renewed enthusiasm in a Christian soul.

Because John the Baptist was so innocent and humble, he really saw things which others overlooked. He understood at once that Christ is God, and conveyed this information to his followers, even though he knew they would desert him and follow the Lamb of God. This was as it should be, for it behooved the Saviour to increase and the Baptist to decrease.



Andrew and his companion were first to visit the Messiah. On the second visit Andrew brought his brother Peter along. In this fashion Christ's apostles were selected. When Nathaniel was chosen, he was greatly surprised because the Master alluded to a private incident. "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nathaniel answered him and said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."

Now the Son of God replied to Nathaniel's protestation of faith in a singular way. Jesus said: "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest. Greater things than these shalt thou see." And He said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."<sup>9</sup>

The Saviour's words are an evident allusion to the vision of Jacob; and clearly indicate the closeness and power of the angels in the New as well as in the Old Testament. Then as now, the Lord God of battles says to us, "And I will be thy keeper whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee back into this land: neither will I leave thee till I shall have accomplished all that I have said."<sup>10</sup>

Then as now, Michael and his valiant regiments hover about to shield us from all harm. But what of us? Where is this loyalty to God so signally exemplified in the career of St. Michael? The vast majority of us are void of it because — because we are not soldiers of Christ.

Frequently we talk of the drabness, the monotony of life. Yet are not these very complaints indicative of our

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<sup>9</sup> John 1:48-51.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 28:15.



divided loyalties, of our pusillanimous mode of action? Indeed they are! Loyalty and courage walk hand in hand. We are discouraged and depressed because of our hesitating faith and the mixed motives in our deeds. If we desire romance — romance at its highest — it can be found in only one way — the way St. Michael points out — in God. If we must fall in love, let it be not a fall as frequently happens. Let us rise to love Love itself, Love without beginning, Love without end. When we place our hands in His, we may then walk forward confidently and fearlessly. His will and ours are then as one. Then — and then only — will the clouds disappear and the sun shine forth. Then — and then only — will we banish drabness and monotony forever from our lives.

The courage and generosity of St. Michael in the King's service are so necessary in these days that it will not be amiss to stress the point. In every walk of life these virtues are of paramount importance. As an example, let us consider for a few moments the lack of generosity we frequently discover in supposedly pious Christian families. It is truly appalling how often Catholic parents object to their daughters dedicating themselves to God in religion.

With perfect complacency a father will tell you, "I had a heart-to-heart talk with Mary last evening. She is entirely too young to know her own mind. If after two years she still persists in shutting herself up in a convent, I'll then give my consent. But in the meantime she is going to have a chance to see the world, to meet eligible young men, and discover for herself that this earth of ours is not such a bad place after all."

Then begins a round of social events shrewdly calculated to undermine the girl's vocation. She is encouraged

to attend dances, allowed to return home at a late, or even early hour. The Saturday night affairs are more prolonged. It is not an easy matter, therefore, to be up early in order to receive spiritual strength from the hearing of Mass and the reception of Holy Communion. In such a worldly atmosphere and under heavy bombardment from all sides, it is not difficult to perceive how the girl's vocation is lost. Much to the parent's pleasure the girl marries. Wide publicity is given the event. Photographers are on hand, together with those socially prominent in the community, to add luster to the occasion.

Not unlikely, the self-satisfied father will approach his parish priest, and, with a knowing smile, remark, "It was just as I surmised from the beginning, Father, Mary never had a vocation. Her happy marriage proves my point." But does it? Absolutely no! When, a few years later, Mary divorces her husband, the unhappy parent begins to see the error of his ways. Now, however, it is too late. Mary's life is ruined. The bloom of youth has gone from her face, and innocence has disappeared from her eyes. Mary is old beyond her years, cold, calculating, hard. Mary, dear reader, is just one out of countless others who have been auctioneered, as the slaves of old, and sold down the river.

We are not overstating this deplorable condition in Catholic home life. Our lines are understatements. A prophet would lash out at such a vicious abuse of parental authority just as a muleteer swings his black whip and unerringly reaches the mark. A prophet would assuredly scourge the hypocrisy of such individuals. He would point out to them the vicious error of denying to the Maker that which wholly belongs to Him. Yet on second thought,



a prophet might not act in so kind a manner. He might ask the Almighty to send Michael and his flaming sword to rid the earth of such selfish people.

Be this as it may, there must be a reconstruction of Catholic home life, if our economic rehabilitation (about which we are forever reading in newspapers and hearing on the radio) is to be durable and permanent in the post-war years. In this rejuvenation of the home, let it be distinctly understood that any parental tampering with vocations is to be entirely stopped.

Our Divine Lord, in speaking to our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph when they found Him in the temple, gives us a clear picture of a child's attitude toward parents, when the sovereignty of God is in question. "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And the answer they received from the Child of twelve ought to be placarded in every home throughout the land, since it recognizes that higher call of the Creator which transcends entirely the obedience an offspring owes his parents. And let me reiterate that this Child is but twelve years of age as He replies: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know, that I must be about my Father's business?"<sup>11</sup>

In the Old Law the finest and fairest of the flock were set aside to be sacrificed to the God of Israel. A lamb with blemish of any kind was cast aside as not worthy to be offered to the Creator. Now if such be the rule with dumb beasts that are presented as a holocaust to the Almighty, is it not reasonable to suppose that the fairest and finest human beings should dedicate themselves to the Master's service? Undoubtedly. Is it not the height of folly to fancy

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 2:48-49.



that the flower of the human flock will be more acceptable to the Divine Majesty after contamination by the world than before, when their hearts were innocent and unstained by the gray dust of the highway?

Study for a few moments how Christ called His apostles and the prompt way they responded — “And passing by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting nets into the sea (for they were fishermen). And Jesus said to them: ‘Come, after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.’ And immediately leaving their nets, they followed him. And going on from thence a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were mending their nets in the ship. And forthwith he called them. And leaving their father Zebedee in the ship with his hired men, they followed him.”<sup>12</sup>

What promptitude! What utter abandonment of themselves to the Saviour’s wishes! Peter asks no questions as to the disposal of the nets and other fishing accessories. James and John have a deep filial love for their father, and still not a word is uttered about the sacrifice involved in leaving him. These simple unlettered fishermen, the father of James and John included, have a profound realization of the great honor bestowed on them in this call from the Master. Everything must be subservient to it. Therefore, as the Scriptures tell us, they immediately followed Him.

The glorious St. Michael, because of his extraordinary loyalty and generosity toward God, must have rejoiced at the enthusiastic spirit displayed by the first disciples of our Lord.

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<sup>12</sup> Mark 1:16–20.

But there is another incident we should like to call to the attention of our readers. It occurred not during the Master's sojourn on earth, but in this war-torn century of ours. The story is all the more remarkable because the mother in question is a Protestant, and her only son was at an age when it was imperative for her to choose between a sound and solid moral training in the humanities, or else send him to a school where God is left out of the curriculum.

Being a truly pious soul, she chose the former, and enrolled her only son in a Catholic school. The boy made rapid advances both in religion and in secular learning. Soon he found himself absorbed in a critical study of the Catholic Church. His mother was fully aware of the lad's leaning toward Rome, and, though her maternal heart desired him to worship as she did, no obstacles were placed in his path. In due course of time the boy was fully instructed and received into the old Church.

Then there came another shock to the mother. After the lapse of some years, the young man asked permission to enter a religious order and was accepted. During our friend's formative years, and even after his ordination to the holy priesthood, his mother continued earnestly in the sect of her belief. At the time of ordination, this valiant woman wrote a poem that for artistry and pathos is difficult to equal. With the kind permission of the good padre, we submit it to our readers.

"But she of her penury hath given all that she had."

All that she had,  
Dear Lord, she gave to Thee,  
Her widow's mite;  
A coin whose value was  
Of little worth.  
But in Thine eyes  
Exceeded far the gifts of those  
Who gave with ostentatious lavishness.

Not what we give  
Of our largess  
It is that counts;  
But the effort to relinquish  
What we hold most dear.  
And so, dear Lord,  
I give Thee this day,  
Into Thy service,  
The son that I have held  
Close to my heart.  
Even as Hannah of old  
The Little Samuel gave,  
So give I him  
To do Thy will.  
His feet, keep ever in Thy path.  
Let Thy word a lantern be  
For his sure guidance.  
May he prove a worthy shepherd  
Of Thy flock.  
And when his work  
In this life is completed,  
Call him, O Lord,  
Unto Thy perfect peace.

And now comes, as it does to all, the end. Years have peeled off and drifted away like wisps of mist. The mother is now old, close to the grave. But through the prayers and Masses offered by her son, and through the inter-



cession of many others, this dear soul, too, returned to the Church of the Ages. In perfect soundness of mind and heart, she humbly makes her submission. One other valiant soul has joined the ranks of the Church militant. Then, after three weeks, she died peacefully in our Lord.

No one is ever outdone by the Almighty in generosity. The incident just quoted verifies the contention. But, above all else, the career of St. Michael, the armor-bearer teaches us this much-needed lesson. Obtain for us, dear Michael, generosity and fortitude in this fight of ours with the powers of darkness.

## Chapter VII

### THE ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL

He is an old man now. It is even possible that, before this volume sees the light of day, his soul may have gone to join those angelic spirits he loved so well. He, Bishop Raphael J. Crimont, S.J., admitted me to the Society of Jesus, and all through the years of study and afterward as a priest, his was the attitude of a loving father toward a very unworthy son.

It was, therefore, in the very nature of things for the good Bishop to visit me, even though such a treat meant a disarranged schedule. After the usual salutations were over, the great Shepherd of the North came directly to the point.

"Why not write a popular volume on the angels, Father Dave? And when you do so, please accentuate those three of the seven archangels so prominent in the Old and the New Testaments. I mean, of course, Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel."

"But your Excellency," I interposed, "is there not a personal element in this, since you are named Raphael?"

At this the dear old man became unusually serious.

"This transcends persons and places and periods. It is a universal want. Does not this topsy-turvy world require

healing? Assuredly it does. And who better able to bring about this desired end than the triumvirate of archangels we have just mentioned? Why, the very name Raphael literally means, 'God has healed.' "

"But how, dear Bishop, should I treat such a subject? Precisely how is the world to be cured of its grievous wounds?"

The Shepherd of the North, however, was too shrewd to be inveigled into a more concrete discussion of the subject. With a quick short movement of his right arm — a gesture lovingly known to all his friends — he smilingly changed the topic of debate.

### 1. OUR NEIGHBORS' ANGELS

Before the war began, a certain taxi company, well known in every city throughout the land, stressed these words as an advertising point: "We Never Sleep!"

There is no doubt that many new customers patronized this firm simply because of the security the idea expressed. Day in and day out, night in and night out, one had but to call a specified number and shortly afterward a cab would be at the door to take the passenger to the destination desired. Likewise, the feeling of safety which arises from our knowledge of the increasing protection that the angels give us ought indeed to increase our love and devotion toward them. But there is danger at this very point. The ordinary run of Catholics, while frankly acknowledging that the angels have little influence upon them as far as their daily lives are concerned, are nevertheless eager to become better acquainted with them. This desire, however, is nebulous, indefinite, ephemeral. The prevalent notion abroad appears to be that a daily prayer



or two, or some special exercises in their honor, will suffice.

The core or heart of devotion toward the angels consists in a deep, solid desire to imitate their virtues. As an impetus toward this end, let us attentively meditate upon the spiritual saga of Raphael and the son of Tobias as portrayed for us in the Old Testament.

Let us never for a moment forget that God, the Supreme Being, while infinitely happy in His own ineffable perfections, finds immense joy and pleasure in the human beings He has created. Each moment we depend upon Him, not only for existence but for preservation as well. This ceaseless solicitude, care, and love of the Creator for the creature is so overwhelming, so universal, that no one is excluded: "My delights were to be with the children of men."<sup>1</sup> No exclusion here; no discrimination whatever.

Again we read: "He made the little and the great, and he hath equally care of all."<sup>2</sup> We heard a friend mention rather self-complacently that he had sent out more than a thousand cards at Christmas time.

To that individual it seemed indeed a large number. From his viewpoint it truly was. But what are a thousand persons as compared to millions and billions! God's care extends over all creation. The fishes in the sea and the birds of the air are tenderly watched over by Him. Verily indeed, "His care is over all flesh."

Not only in theory but in practice as well He is the Master of creation. Every individual (red, brown, yellow, black, or white) is a special object of His brooding tenderness. When the would-be neopagans of Germany (whose ideologies are more destructive than any ever enunciated

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. 8:31.

<sup>2</sup> Wisd. 6:8.

by the pagans of old) — when these diabolical fanatics first promulgated the error of Nordic supremacy: that Germans were the chosen race destined to rule the nations of earth, it was the saintly Pius XI who first sounded the clarion call arousing all men of good will to energetic action. It is consoling in the extreme for Catholics to know how promptly and how thoroughly the Holy Father labeled these nefarious errors for what they are.

*First Error.* Human beings, by their natural constitution, inherited and unchangeable, so differ among themselves that the highest of them are farther removed from the lowest than the lowest are from the highest species of brutes.

*Second Error.* Vigor of race and purity of blood must be conserved and fostered at any cost; and whatever leads to this end is by that very fact justifiable.

*Third Error.* It is from blood, wherein the genius of the race is contained, that all intellectual and moral qualities flow as from their most potent source.

*Fourth Error.* The principal end of education is to perfect the natural constitution of the race, and to fire the mind with a burning love of one's own race, as the greatest good.

*Fifth Error.* Religion is subservient to race and must be adapted to it.

*Sixth Error.* The prime source and supreme rule of the whole order of Justice is race instinct.

*Seventh Error.* Individuals exist through the State and for the State; whatever rights they have are derived solely from the State.

All these errors — frequently denounced by the valiant and saintly Pius XI — are indeed detestable before God.



But the sixth error is especially to be excoriated since it puts brother against brother, father against son.

But need we go so far afield as Germany to uncover error and hatred? Not at all! The race riots in Detroit, in Los Angeles, and in other cities of the land prove to us that, while theoretically this may be "the land of the free and the home of the brave," it actually is a hotbed of intolerance.

We have had the great privilege of laboring among the colored people of San Diego for almost two years. We found them intensely interested in religion. The majority are honest, God-fearing individuals; a few are not what they should be. Yet, if white men and women had to endure the constant attitude of hatred against them, which these poor people daily experience, we doubt if they would go on living. And still these happy souls take the worst events, as they do the most pleasant, in stride, just like a man accepts rain and sunshine as coming equally from the God of heaven and earth.

When one happens to be in a parish of colored people, instances of hatred and intolerance are everyday events. Let me present a few of these just to bring home to us what hypocrites we are.

Mr. — lives in the parish and sings in our little choir. We have never known him to use tobacco in any shape or form. He worked in a defense plant until a few months ago. It seems that one night he entered the lavatory; noticing at once a pungent odor of cigarette smoke, he paused. After a moment or two a policeman followed him in and said: "Now we know who does the smoking around here." Next morning our friend was discharged. The injustice of the affair did not discourage him. By



nightfall he had secured an even better job. It was only after two months had passed that we were told about it.

Again, a colored man in the uniform of the United States Army stopped at a wayside café to obtain a soft drink. "Sorry, we are all out," said the waitress. Yet there were civilians sitting at the counter enjoying the cool refreshing drink which this soldier desired.

We have a doctor friend, a convert, who recently remarked that when he joined in reciting the Rosary in church and heard people repeating devoutly the "Our Father," and afterward saw these selfsame individuals discriminating against Negro and Mexican, he felt nauseated, physically and spiritually.

There is a yeast at work, however, in the world today. It is a yeast of affection and good will toward all. Americans are no longer called the "white devils" in China. Instead, the Chinese speak of us as "white friends." Even the immense population of pariahs in India are remembered; sympathy toward them becomes stronger and stronger as day succeeds day. Just how effective and lasting this change for the better will be depends absolutely upon you and me — upon the little, unknown people the world over.

Have you ever watched a conscientious gardener as he goes about his allotted tasks? Here, he tenderly softens the earth about a rosebush; there, he goes so far as to prune a tree. Now, if flowers and trees had the power of expression, they would doubtlessly prefer the gardener's assiduous care rather than to grow wild and quickly die for lack of water and attention. As a matter of fact, trees and flowers, like animals and human beings, respond quickly to care and friendly attention. If you want any-

thing to grow, you must love it. This goes likewise for men and women the world over.

Those who depend on fear and might of armaments to establish an equilibrium among the races soon will discover how bitterly they have disappointed themselves and others.

God so loved the world as to give us His own Divine Son. And He has provided each of us with an angel to watch over us day and night. And these angelic spirits are on terms of intimacy with those who spend themselves unsparingly for the temporal and spiritual good of the neighbor.

Let cynics continue to sneer; allow economists pompously to harangue the intelligensia with schemes for world betterment, for a saner approach toward capital and labor; permit planning commissions to squander time and money on postwar problems. Yet if the spiritual element be lacking, if there be not respect and affection for mankind, the mansion, erected on shifting sands, quickly crumbles to the ground and — great is the fall thereof.

Love, therefore, is the anodyne, the solvent, for all human woes because love is everlasting and stronger than death. It is almighty, for — God is Love.

## 2. RAPHAEL THE HEALER

The angels are on intimate terms with those who expend themselves for the neighbor. History records many a lesson from the lives of the saints to bear out our words. Possibly the most consoling of all is the narrative we find in the Book of Tobias. It accentuates two important truths: the immense sway Satan wields in the world about us; and — on the other side of the picture — the infinite



tenderness of the Creator in providing an effective remedy against the machinations of the evil one.

The tableau opens by portraying for us a truly great man. He is brave in the midst of cowards, a hero among weaklings. The inevitable happens: Tobias and his family are remembered to this day, while the names of the "pussyfooters" who dwelt about him in captivity have long ago fallen into oblivion. It is not at all difficult for us to visualize Tobias today. He would be one of those quiet, hard-working, and God-fearing men who, with buoyant resignation, look to the King of kings rather than to earthly leaders for deliverance and peace.

There were Quislings in the days of Tobias too. But these double-dealers, who strove to serve two masters, received no consolation from him. In his youth and as an adult he clung steadfastly to his Maker and, as a consequence, the Creator Himself gives us his eulogy. Like a clear strong clarion note, it echoes and re-echoes down the arches of the years until man and his works are no more.

"And when he was younger than any of the tribe of Nephtali, yet did he no childish thing in his work. Moreover when all went to the golden calves which Jeroboam king of Israel had made, he alone fled the company of all and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel, offering faithfully all his firstfruits and his tithes, so that in the third year he gave all his tithes to the proselytes, and strangers. These and such like things did he observe when but a boy according to the law of God. But when he was a man, he took to wife Anna of his own tribe and had a son by her, whom he called after his own name. And from his



infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin.”<sup>3</sup>

Such is the picture of that favored trio before the tribe (the family of Tobias included) is taken in captivity to Ninive. It is in this period of oppression that the real greatness of Tobias shines forth. King Salmanasar allows him to go about at will. He even demonstrates his affection by bestowing money on him. Tobias takes advantage of the permission to visit a great number of his kindred. He consoles them, he gives them wholesome advice. When he discovers Gabelus in dire want, ten talents of silver are turned over to him, Tobias asking in return only a note for the aforesaid amount.

Then the storms come. Sennacherib, who hates the Jews, now reigns in place of his dead father. But quickly and calmly Tobias views the scene. God is in heaven, he reflects, so why not continue to bring succor to his unfortunate countrymen? He does just this. He feeds the hungry, gives clothes to the naked, and buries those who have been slain. King Sennacherib regards him as an opponent and seeks ways and means to kill him, together with others of his tribe. Tobias with his wife and son are obliged to flee away naked. He is concealed from the king's rage, for many love him. Then God manifests His power. Sennacherib is slain by his own sons; and Tobias and his family return to their home.

Tobias continues to aid the destitute. When an Israelite is found slain in the street, this saintly soul leaves the dinner prepared for his family and friends and cautiously carries the body to his own house, in order to bury it when darkness falls. Well-meaning neighbors remonstrate,

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<sup>3</sup> Tob. 1:4-10.

reminding him of his narrow escape in recent weeks. Nothing daunted and fearing God more than the king, Tobias continues to carry the bodies of his slain kindred, hides them in his house and buries them at midnight.

Scripture tells us that one day Tobias was particularly weary from burying the dead and cast himself down by the wall and slept. We know what happened; some hot dung from a swallow's nest fell upon his eyes and rendered him totally blind.

Now there are many who gladly toil for the Creator; yet few resign themselves to suffer for Him. Tobias was an exception. Even when skeptics and scoffers came to ridicule this man of God, he was not turned aside from his objective. When relatives and kinsfolk rebuked him, Tobias, remembering how God tried Job, replied, "We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith in Him."<sup>4</sup>

Tobias said to his son, "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee."<sup>5</sup>

As Tobias instructed the lad and with humility and tears begged forgiveness of his Maker; so, too, in far-off Rages — another prayer ascended to the throne of God. It was the prayer of a virtuous maiden Sara whose marriage was continually thwarted by an evil spirit who killed each prospective husband. "At that time the prayers of them both were heard in the sight of the glory of the most high God: and the holy angel of the Lord, Raphael, was sent

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<sup>4</sup> Tob. 2:18.

<sup>5</sup> Tob. 3:7.



to heal them both whose prayers at one time were released in the sight of the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

Today we hear much of the family unit as the foundation of a nation’s greatness. Yet pause a moment. The preciousness of marriage comes not from man or State but directly from God who co-operates with husband and wife in the sublimest of acts — the creation of human beings for His everlasting kingdom.

It is, therefore, not so much the preservation of marriage as its spiritualization which should command our attention. And it is right here that the Book of Tobias opens our eyes. This saintly patriarch was not blessed with a large family. The Maker of heaven and earth intrusted to him only one son. Hence he concentrated his attention upon rearing the boy from infancy in the ways of God. As the lad grew to man’s estate his father impressed upon him the signal honor of being alive; to look at a sunrise before thinking of a woman; to speak to God before considering sex.

Catholics in America have a stupendous task ahead of them: to break down the false — yet almost universally accepted notions on love. From theater, radio, magazines, and newspapers come the same opiate, lulling our people into forgetfulness — and oblivion. Playwrights, novelists, and editors of movie periodicals plague their hearers with the idea that love “will have its way.” The results from such an attitude are truly cataclysmic — they cannot be fully enumerated.

We label as poisonous the contents of bottles which, when taken, produce physical death. But what care do we take to safeguard young minds from the diabolical

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<sup>6</sup> Tob. 3:24-25.



prescription that brings everlasting destruction to the soul?

Sometime ago an eminent actress advanced a proposition that true artistry on the stage demanded a high moral standard. We tacitly admit this idea in political life where moral lapses inevitably reap their consequences. Irish folk the world over know of the unfortunate affair of Charles Stuart Parnell. In recent years the desire of an English king to wed a divorced woman was followed by his abdication from power.

In the amusement world quite the opposite appears to hold true. We are fully aware that there are many actors and actresses of minor repute who lead clean wholesome lives. But study the heroes and the heroines who are worshiped by the avid cinema-going public. How can an actress enact a faithful wife when she is destitute of faith in mankind; when she has — like the woman of Samaria — seven husbands instead of one? Why require an actor to depict the role of a loving and devoted husband when it is public property that he is in private life anything else but a faithful consort?

We admire the Legion of Decency for its success in banning obnoxious plays and cinemas from the younger generation. But is it not an opportune time to demand that the lives of those who hold in their hands the lives of countless souls should reform themselves or else step down from their position as leaders in the theatrical world?

It was not extraordinary for the young Tobias to be singularly attracted to the visitor he met in the street, for, in the midst of sin and corruption, the son of Tobias had remained undefiled. Like Raphael he was angelic in nature. But the thing, however, which should give us pause and likewise serious food for meditation is the

importance of the unimportant. For chastity is considered as of little value in the world today. In fact, the majority of men and women look upon it as a liability rather than as an asset. Upon this virtue is vented the spleen and irony of the modern press. So terrific, so systematic, and so sustained has been the onslaught that, unfortunately, the younger generation, with few exceptions, have thrown down their arms and surrendered.

Time was when women were leaders. And in those far-off, halcyon days women were not so much occupied in making good as in being good. There was an accepted tradition then that young ladies were not destined to compete with men in our industrial and political life. At that time there was no concern about careers but only about *the career* — preparation for married life and the duties of motherhood.

Many are inclined to place blame for our moral debacle of three decades ago on World War I; and the alarming increase in divorce these days will likely be attributed to World War II. But "pigs is pigs," facts are facts. Even in conservative England, we discover a 400 per cent increase in the breaking up of family ties. One need not be a pessimist to admit the picture is dark indeed. War is a scourge allowed by the Creator as a means to awaken us to a sense of our obligations toward God. But are we taking advantage of this chastisement? Assuredly not.

Forty years ago we would bar from the home individuals of loose morals. But today we accept them and, if they happen to be celebrities, we give them an enthusiastic reception. In a word, our perimeter is of the earth — earthly. And God's criterion of good and evil is cast aside entirely.



Even in the days of Lot there were some who clung steadfastly to the Maker. The number, however, was so pathetically small that the anger of God was not propitiated: Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed completely.

Sad to relate, those who are fervently devoted to the King today are woefully in the minority. The plain, unvarnished fact is that the fences securely protecting the Christian home have been ruthlessly broken down; and the holy of holies — that God-given family unit — has been almost obliterated from the earth.

The older Tobias, because of his multiple acts of charity and innate goodness of heart, sees his material possessions returned to him in the evening of life. But silver and gold are dubious possessions at best. He is given a gift which cannot be measured in dollars and cents: God Himself selects a spouse for his only son. And mark it well, not a syllable is uttered about this woman's external beauty. We are not reminded about glamour or any other such nonsense. Yet the one essential trait comes to the surface in the piteous confession she makes to God: "But a husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust. And either I was unworthy of them, or they perhaps were not worthy of me: because perhaps thou hast kept me for another man. For thy counsel is not in man's power. But this every one is sure of that worshippeth thee, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned: and if it be under tribulation, it shall be delivered: and if it be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to thy mercy. For thou art not delighted in our being lost: because after a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness. Be thy name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever!"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tob. 3:18-23.



Right here is the most serious malady of the world, for it will mean eventually the destruction of the whole human race. We are making the irreparable mistake of considering lust as love, and love as lust. Right here, dear God, we perceive the immediate need of a physician. Right here we implore Raphael — the healer — to bind up the wounds of mankind.

### 3. FRIEND OF PURE SOULS

Raphael's trek began, as all journeys should, in a spirit of obedience. Raphael was presented to the boy's parents. They approved of him, and, everything being ready, the two of them took to the road.

The most tender manifestation of the Creator's gentleness toward us lies in the gentleness of His approach. Raphael, bereft of his splendor and glory, comes to this lowly home as a mountain guide; and we know full well that, when man's redemption was to take place, God appeared in our midst as a tiny Babe. The Infinite assuredly loves us poor finite beings.

The Almighty likewise, usually, makes use of ordinary means to obtain an extraordinary result. When the large fish scares the boy Tobias as he washes his feet, Raphael tells him just what he should do. The lad, however, is eager to know just why the heart, the gall, and the liver of the fish are carried along as remedies. To which Raphael answers: "If thou put a little piece of its heart upon coals, the smoke thereof driveth away all kind of devils, either from man or from woman, so that they come no more to them. And the gall is good for anointing the eyes, in which there is a white speck, and they shall be cured."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Tob. 4:8-9.

We have heard many animadversions about the slowness and crudeness of the horse-and-buggy age, but, on the whole, these were clean, wholesome times when the moral law was usually observed and respected, when the marriage tie was viewed as permanent, when parents considered children as the most precious of blessings, and not as a liability and a curse.

Let no one fool himself. We are no longer in the mountains. We have gone down, down. If verification for just an assertion be needed, consider for just a few moments our utter depravity and lack of moral perception.

A priest reiterates the binding force of God's law. He vehemently denounces the animality in "planned parenthood." The next day leading newspapers take him to task, as if this Levite had given expression to something new. The priest was only promulgating what God had commanded since time began: Thou shalt not kill!

Or follow some weary little woman as she goes from block to block in search of a house for herself and her children. Listen to the answers received: "We do not take children at this apartment! Children and dogs are not wanted here!"

In one of his finest meditations St. Ignatius desires retreatants to imagine themselves as cast off by human society and made to dwell in the fields with brute beasts. But when one looks at the record of men and women who have thrown away mate after mate as lust dictates — well, one somehow prefers the good strong smell of a pigsty, or the gentle way in which a horse acts when he knows you have a piece of candy in your pocket.

We were chatting with an old friend not long ago. He spoke of World War I, and complained bitterly of



how even government agents had defrauded both people and the nation under the guise of patriotism. At last he made a remark which, at first sight, seemed hard and severe. "The three go together," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean where lust and greed abound, there likewise you find blood."

For the past three decades it is apparent that lust and greed have been inundating the nation with an ever increasing tide and, as a consequence, we have had blood too. Consider the millions of lives destroyed on the fields of battle. Do we still want our friends, our brothers, our sons to be fodder for the roaring cannons? But such a question, you will retort, is on the very face of it, absurd. What have I to do with killing, with hatred, and wars? I am peaceably inclined. I go about my business in an amicable manner. I support my church. I am a patriotic citizen.

Just here is where the trouble lies. We have a pharisaical outlook on life. We boast of our good deeds, our liberality toward the poor, but rarely do we strike our breasts, like the Publican, and murmur: "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner." The modern world, my friends, has lost belief in sin and the consequences thereof. It has shut God out of its mind. It is under the influence of the devil.

Is it any wonder therefore that men flit from one paramour to another as a butterfly wings its way from flower to flower? Is it at all extraordinary that these people finally become hard as concrete; that they are at last so determined on their hellish schemes that they allow nothing to thwart them? Of course not. Many a



man has tried since time began to walk away from himself, but few ever walked away whole. They leave behind something of themselves — some lost horizons, some souvenirs of the idealism of youth, when faith and trust were buoyantly strong in their hearts.

The prodigal son was obsessed and possessed by a veritable sea of emotions. On one point he was adamant: he would do as he pleased, come what might. And as the vast concourse of people today, the prodigal traveled to a far-off country where he could satisfy his passions unmolested by anyone. The Scripture tells us that he wasted his substance and wrecked his physical as well as his moral manhood living riotously. With loss of money and health, his would-be friends quickly deserted him. Then comes a famine. He is obliged to feed swine, and some of the husks intended for them he surreptitiously devours. It is the old, old story of the horse-and-mule-and-swine age. When we act as brutes we become lower than brutes.

Consider, however, the infinite pity and tenderness of God. It is only when the prodigal son is purified by suffering, pain, and want that he thinks about those souvenirs of home — about those lost horizons of his youth. Then the will is brought to bear on the subject: "I'll return to my father's home!"

The great sinner and greater saint, Augustine, wept copious tears whenever he read the story of the prodigal son; for the parable minutely delineates his own career. None of us are really happy unless at home — in the state of grace with God as our Father, Jesus Christ as our elder Brother, and the Holy Spirit as our Consoler.

We are to establish, then, a home here on earth, and upon the solid building of it depends our future status in

our everlasting home in heaven. So important in the eyes of the Creator is this sacred unit of society that the God of heaven and earth took human form and lived a domestic life with Mary and Joseph for thirty years. Men travel thousands of miles to see monuments and places of great interest. Here, however, is the shrine of shrines where people should daily go in spirit to learn the art of capturing peace and happiness in household affairs. Nazareth is not alone a shrine, it is a standard for us to approximate.

But how? By following the advice of Raphael. God is to be consulted first, and only secondly the parties concerned. This means a new orientation. It is the old theme, very beautifully expressed by Dante: "In His will is our peace."

Looking, then, to the Maker, we select the partner of our choice. Lust is to be driven from the forefront, since marriage means the procreation and education of children. Husband and wife co-operate with God in giving life to an intelligent being with an immortal soul. Every day in such surroundings constitutes peace. There is a grandmother seated in a doorway, dreaming in retrospect. There are little feet running about like hummingbirds flitting from place to place. There are possibly broken pieces of plaster to be seen, for children are exuberant of soul and body. Yet, nevertheless, there is a captivating mellowness in the faces and voices of that contented group. Here is poetry, literature, and art at its highest.

But what of divorce to mar so glorious a landscape? There can be no denying its nefarious inroads. Here is a monster we must slay or — be killed ourselves. The reasons advanced for present-day severance of the marriage tie are



so flimsy, so small, so ludicrous as to make a mockery out of the law as well as the litigants. A recent glance over the marital situation reveals that one woman won a divorce after complaining that her husband refused to wash the dishes, make beds, and do the housecleaning, after he had promised to do so. Another complained that her husband constantly made her eat venison. Divorces were granted on these grounds.

On more than one occasion the Master solemnly warned us that unless we become as little children we shall not enter heaven. Do we meditate sufficiently on this command of our Divine Lord? Emphatically we do not! Otherwise our courts would not be cluttered with demands for severance of the solemn pledges given at marriage.

Let me explain. A child is a born optimist. He obtains untold pleasure out of small things, like a dog, a knife, or a rabbit — things which ordinary folk can hardly see at all. A child, too, is at heart a magician, a transformer. He is firmly convinced that the homely, ragged girl of today will reappear in the near future as a beautiful, gorgeously dressed princess. He realizes that doing right pays incalculably rich dividends — that the hero and heroine will eventually win out. And though the same old pattern of story be told to him night after night, he is not uninterested. Quite the opposite. He is on pins and needles until the inevitable denouement arrives — until the forces of right triumph over the cohorts of evil.

Unfortunately people in adult life act in an opposite manner. They throw aside experiences, people, marriages, just because such things have become distasteful to them. Now what you throw away is lost. Your hands are empty and you have nothing with which to occupy yourself. The



fact is that those apparently useless creatures have some good qualities. They are capable of transformation. By being worked over with patience and hope they soon become just the opposite of what they were.

During the war, the American people were daily called upon to stop waste. In newspapers and on the radio the criminality of waste was stressed. We decry waste at any time, but how seldom do we enter the moral domain and perceive the ruin and havoc caused by divorce. Here is something which not only magnates of the motion pictures but everybody can rightfully speak of as a colossal and stupendous waste.

Not so long ago we received an invitation to attend the golden jubilee of a married couple. For some twenty years of those fifty the husband was an habitual drunkard. Yet the brave little wife never lost hope. Patiently and perseveringly she went about her daily tasks of caring for the children and, at the same time minimizing the faults and sins of her partner. She had taken a vow to remain with him until death and — please God — she would generously fulfill her part of the contract.

No one knows better than a mother what dreadful inroads excessive drinking creates in family life. There are disagreements and quarrels, since a drunkard's nerves are usually on edge. Throughout those trying years she remained cheerful, optimistic, hopeful. Not to neighbors but to the Creator she went for consolation. In God she trusted and — as happens always — she was not confounded.

Her husband suddenly stopped drinking entirely. And with the recovery of self-respect, his innate goodness and charm again were manifest. In some inadequate way, he began to realize the torture his wife had endured for two

decades. Once more he took his place as a respected citizen of the community; once more they were, as in the olden days, sweethearts, lovers. Mellow and golden indeed is their jubilee, as a gorgeous sunset in the western sky.

It was of this moral transformation Tennyson wrote when he penned these lines:

. . . Woman is not undeveloped man  
But diverse: could we make her as the man  
Sweet love were slain; his dearest bond is this:  
Not like to like, but like in difference.  
Yet in the long years liker they grow;  
The man be more of woman, she of man.  
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;  
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,  
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind,  
Till at the last she sets herself to man  
Like perfect music unto noble words.

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Self-reverent each, and reverencing each,  
Distinct in individualities,  
But like each other even as those who love.

Yet to rebuild the home on solid, on unshakeable foundations we need not words. But we do require aid from on high.

Raphael, the healer, render us courageous and indomitable in our crusade for the restoration of Christian ideals in the family life. Heal us of our grievous wounds!

## Chapter VIII

### THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

We received an extremely interesting letter at Christmas time. It was written by a devoted little nun, caring for orphans. She etched the scene so vividly that it was not difficult to visualize it perfectly. She had told the children that, while laboring at their appointed tasks, they might sing their favorite Christmas hymns. They began with "Adeste Fideles." Afterward they attempted "Silent Night." Then they veered away and started with much gusto, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas."

At this point our nun friend entered the room and remarked, "That last composition, girls, is not a hymn. I fancy it is one of our modern songs." The girls looked at one another in a knowing way but said nothing. Sometime later sister returned to her charges and discovered that the same condition prevailed. The girls would start off with the old familiar Christmas hymns and then — then they would swing to "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," and into the melody went all the fervor of their young innocent hearts. Again sister reminded them that the song they were singing is not a hymn.

At this juncture one of the older girls came forward to explain: "But, Sister, you do not understand."



"Understand? What do you mean?"

"Well, Sister," resumed the girl, "when Father Robinson, the war chaplain, was here last he urged the girls to pray earnestly that all his lads would have a white Christmas. In other words, Sister, he wanted them to be in the state of sanctifying grace. The girls decided that the surest way of bringing this about was to keep on singing the song."

"Your motive, dear girls, puts a different complexion on the whole affair. But — but remember it is not a hymn. You must likewise realize that just wishing to have our lads in the state of grace is not sufficient: we should make our dreams come true by little acts of self-denial."

At this moment a comely lass at the back of the room desired to clarify the subject and asked, "But what kind of sacrificial acts, Sister?"

There were frowns on many a forehead, for these youngsters knew how abhorrent lipstick and rouge were to the sister.

"You might try doing without cosmetics as a small token of your appreciation to Christ for His infinite abasement in taking human form for our salvation."

With this remark the nun left the room.

Naturally an informal discussion took place when the sister walked away. Most of the obloquy fell upon the girl who had requested that a specific means of self-sacrifice be pointed out to them. After a short time, however, the girls came to the main point mentioned by the good nun; and at long last they decided to follow her idea as a slight token of their love for the Divine Infant.

## 1. SPIRITUAL FORTITUDE

We mention the incident for a very good reason. The word Gabriel means fortitude of God. Along the highway of self-denial we need assistance, and who is better able to render that spiritual aid than the archangel of the Annunciation — Gabriel.

In an age very similar to our own — an era of paganism and of diabolical persecutions — lived a great saint, Cyprian of Carthage. It is a far cry from A.D. 250 to the twentieth century, and yet the same problems of that period are with us today. Said Cyprian in speaking of ornaments and dress, "On this point, in the fear which faith suggests to me and the love which brotherhood demands, not virgins and widows only, but all females ought to be cautioned that what God has formed — ought in no wise to be tampered with, whether with yellow dye or black powder or rouge or any other preparation at all, which undoes the lineaments of nature.

"If any artist were to paint in admirable coloring the countenance of anyone, and having at last done so, and given the portrait its last strokes; and then another put forth his hand and, as if with better experience, added fresh finish to that which was finished and painted already, the former artist would suffer heavy injustice and show great displeasure. Think you that your adventurous boldness will carry no penalty where the injustice is against God as the Artificer?" Then addressing himself to those who pencil the eyebrows, he says: "Are you not afraid that after death God will say, 'This is not my handiwork; I do not know you'?"

This craze for striving to gild the lily is not confined

to the young; it is seen in the old as well. We met a woman of about sixty years the other day on the street. Formerly it was an easy matter to recognize her, for formerly her apparel was neat and attractive and her countenance was as the Almighty designed it — comely and beautiful. But the other day we failed to identify her, for the comeliness had vanished. Or rather it was hidden by rouge and lipstick. Her eyebrows were penciled in a narrow elongated angle; and her fingernails were as the claws of a hawk and dyed in the latest up-to-date fashion. We were rather abashed for a moment or two since here was a Catholic lady with a Catholic husband. She was arrayed, however, as a girl of eighteen.

We are not insinuating anything. We know that she and her husband are fine practical Catholics. Nevertheless, we were saddened by the sight. Plenty of soap and water could have produced a much more wholesome picture. We then would have seen the real person, and not a caricature.

Oh, it is easy for individuals to brush aside lightly a remark of this kind. Such a one could easily retaliate by saying that priests are not in a position to discuss such matters. Well, St. Cyprian was a priest and even a bishop and yet he felt in duty bound to warn his flock of harm from this angle. Another will pass it off by retorting that modern-day style requires it. But the point is: It is quite the style now to divorce a husband or wife, and take on a new mate. Even though worldlings tell us that such a course is permissible, would the well-instructed Catholic allow it as the “stylish” thing to do?

Assuredly not. The faithful exercise of our religion is intimately connected with self-denial. Clinging to one per-



son through life is but one phase of this abnegation. It takes real Christian stamina to reject a seducer who would destroy your family. And the horrible increase of this cancerous growth today is due solely to one main cause — lack of will power. Our bizarre and risqué mode of dressing stems from the same root. We need, oh, so woefully, the Archangel Gabriel — the fortitude of God — to strengthen our wavering wills, to bolster our crumbling defenses.

But will power is essential not alone to the conquering of the evils we have mentioned above; it is the warp and woof in almost every action we perform during the day.

As a question in point, let us consider the virtue of temperance. The majority of people consider this as pertaining to the right use of alcoholic beverages. Such, of course, is not the case, but for the time being, it will not be amiss to ponder the virtue in question from this viewpoint. Priests especially, because wine is used at Holy Mass, are prone periodically to accept the cup that cheers. Some will even go so far as to state that to mix socially with men and women, to partake moderately of intoxicants, is an asset rather than a detriment. It gives a unique approach, they say. Many a conversion has taken place just because certain padres felt it proper to drink and dine with others.

The question, no doubt, is a debatable one. But as year follows year, we come to the conclusion known since boyhood days — that faith is a pure gift from heaven and it requires an intellectual assent rather than a social approach. Moreover, as the years go by, not only social contacts of themselves become insipid and dangerous, but priests who unfortunately have followed this

*modus vivendi* find themselves tied about by an appetite that is very difficult to suppress at a moment's notice.

A laudable movement — and one quite consonant with the Christian philosophy of life — was born some years ago in holy Ireland. This pledge of total abstinence from all forms of alcohol is administered to the *ordinandus* months before his elevation to the priesthood. By reason of this promise, voluntarily given, the prospective levite agrees to deny himself the consolations of whiskey or wine. The only exception is when a physician orders it during time of sickness. As a slight return, he is permitted to wear the total abstinence emblem. Should he, unfortunately, deviate from this contract, fully and freely signed, there is but one obligation developing upon him — to stop wearing the emblem.

Now here is a solid manner of training future leaders in the ways of righteousness. But never should it be forgotten that temperance signifies moderation in all things. We may have no desire for strong drink, but we may, nevertheless, overindulge in smoking. We may abstain from all the things mentioned and still, when it comes to the tongue, we may have no control over it at all. And what more harmful indulgence than backbiting and slandering the neighbors?

But let us thankfully suppose that you are not a person actively engaged in tearing another's reputation to pieces. What then? Well, there are a hundred and one different devices we may use to exercise self-control and, at the same time, bring pleasure and happiness to others.

An electric light may have inadvertently been left glowing when the one appointed to turn it out has forgotten his duty. For us to fulfill the small task and — more im-



portant still — to say nothing about it, is one way of making things go smoother.

We know of one gentleman who spent almost two hours at the task of keeping a revolving door going. At each attempt to enter he stepped back to give place to a lady. During the entire time not one person was so courteous as to thank him for his trouble. We may be sure, nevertheless, that the Master did not forget his efforts.

Another fount of discord and disquietude, even among those who are gracious and pleasant to the neighbor, is the habit of forgetting entirely the amenities of life when we are at home with our own. There are not a few people who lead a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde existence. In company, they are the life of the party. They are liked by all for their courtly ways and manners; but once inside the enclosure of their domicile — with accent on *their* — they are totally different individuals. They are impatient, intolerant, and dictatorial. Their patient and browbeaten wives and children have carried this cross for years on end. The hypocrisy of such persons is so noticeable and detrimental to offspring as to constitute a contributory factor in juvenile delinquency.

Before earnestly begging the aid of Archangel Gabriel in our efforts to curb faults and sins of the tongue let us remark in passing that there is an unhealthful trend both in public and private lives concerning criticism. Now, in itself, we should not consider criticism as something intrinsically wrong. It is not. Quite the contrary: it is healthful and wholesome for the common good. Even where criticism goes beyond reasonable bounds, there is usually in it a few grains of truth which strike home, a



fact which makes us smart under the lash. The greater a man becomes in his own estimation (and, at times, in the esteem of others) the less inclined is that individual to accept any kind of faultfinding. Hence we have totalitarian states and supreme arbiters.

The world will never be a better place wherein to live until we as individuals become more submissive, more humble. Now consider for a moment the topic in question. Under criticism the majority of people usually manifest impatience and animosity. Or, if there be some truth in the charges made, the ordinary course is to shift the blame onto somebody else. This is our national weakness: to alibi out of our faults and make a scapegoat of an innocent person.

Now were we to leave the many criticisms which come our way in the keeping of the Almighty and say nothing more about them, the world would be definitely a better place in which to live. But, no! Pride must be pacified. And such appeasements are far more harmful than the political maneuvering with which we are all familiar.

But let us get on to the spiritual fortitude which is constantly required of us if we are to conquer effectively the various evils of the tongue which beset us these days.

We frequently speak of St. John as the Apostle of Love, for his discourses are inspiring and heavenly. But that gallant laborer in the Lord's vineyard, St. Paul, who was so aggressive and so pugnacious, Paul, the fighter, sums up our entire attitude toward the neighbor in few words. He says: "Love is the fulfillment of the law."

If we eliminated all rancor and hatred from our dealings

with others, the end would soon be in sight. And love is the instrument we must use to bring about this desired effect.

Consider our minority and racial groups by such a standard and our rancor and hatred will vanish. God created man in His own image. Love makes us fully aware of this fact. Therefore, the colored man, the Jew, the non-Catholic, the pagan, are fundamentally alike in that they are children of the same Father in heaven. Realizing that the good God makes His sun shine on all, whether bad or good, whether white or black, our tolerance, friendship, and love take on a much wider scope. Our hearts embrace the whole world in sympathy and affection. No one is excluded.

## 2. ASK FOR PATIENCE

We have frequently entreated Gabriel, the fortitude of God, for strength to love the neighbor as he should be loved. We go now a step further: we ask him to obtain for us patience and peace of soul in dealing with those tiresome souls who have acquired the habit of going to one priest, then to another, with their difficulties. No priest is reluctant to profer aid where aid is needed. But the individuals in question would, under ordinary circumstances, be classified as neurotics. Nevertheless, just to tag these unfortunates with a name is not solving the problem. It stares us squarely in the face.

Why do these rather abnormal people go from one source of consolation to another? For the very simple reason that one padre, finding himself futile to help the person concerned, suggests another priest. We know of one priest who labored for seventeen years to solve a

case of this kind. He mentioned to another levite, when it became necessary for him to move from the locality where the person resided — he mentioned that a temptation to throw a few books at the unfortunate individual might present itself. Some months later the two met. Said the second: "I not only had the temptation to throw a few books. I actually did it."

Of course, the priest did not really throw any books, but, he wanted the other to understand that the effort in point far exceeded the patience demanded of him. It is so in most cases. In fact, a padre who quietly listens to these tales of woe is oftentimes spoken of as effeminate, or as a parlor priest.

A doctor's name may be suggested, or a psychologist's; yet the trouble is that these unfortunate men and women are not cured just by X-raying them. Let us grant that they are neuresthenics, neurotics, or anything else we think them to be; for us to solve their sorrows and heartaches still remains our duty. The one who spent seventeen years on a case before a cure was reached teaches us that patience and sympathy in an heroic degree are needed.

Let priests, nuns, and lay folk tackle this spiritual chore as it should be tackled — with an almost infinite degree of Christian affection and love. These folk are our brothers and sisters. Some are even linked to us by bonds of blood as well as religion. For padres and lay people to assume a cynical attitude toward such is almost inconceivable. Still facts are facts. Many, both in the priesthood and among the laity, parading as excellent Catholics, follow the action of Pilate — they simply wash their hands of them.

Some of the people of whom we speak are frequently



close to the border line of insanity. In fact, not a few have spent months in institutions for the insane. It is this heavy humiliation that weighs most grievously upon them. "How can I ever look my children and my husband in the face again?" asked one of these derelicts recently. "I return home under a cloud. I am no longer the same woman I was."

Now we could have made little of her predicament. We could have used palliatives to cover her ailment with the cloak of excuses and disguises. We preferred instead not to minimize her difficulties. We plainly told her that, as ugly black tissues will remain on a leg for years and years after the carbuncle has dried up, so too the memories of her stay in the insane asylum would stay with her. We then explained that no cross ever carried by us had not been previously carried by Christ. Take, to clarify the issue, the Master's appearance at the court of Herod. Eternal Truth, everlasting Omniscience is treated as one insane, as a fool. If the Almighty endured this ignominy, it was done for a purpose: To teach us the foolishness of the wise and the wisdom of the foolish.

Then we told her the story of the jester. The bauble he carried was emblematic of his trade. Though his heart was sore within him because of pain and ill health, his duty was to laugh and invent jokes to tickle the fancy of the spectators. In the sight of God, who was the greater: the king clothed in his ermine and purple and filled with pride, or the poor humble jester who made others laugh when he would rather go apart from the crowd and have a good cry? God's judgments are not as the judgments of men. Those we consider great and powerful, the Almighty frequently regards as of little worth. It is,

therefore, God's estimate of us that matters, and not man's. If Jesus became a fool for our sakes and was treated as such, why should we complain when we are placed on the same level as He? Should we not rather rejoice and be glad at being elevated to His sublime plane?

The little woman had never considered her plight from such a spiritual vantage point. She was definitely relieved. I might go so far as to assert that she was greatly exhilarated — buoyed up by the thought that she, a poor sinner, was permitted to suffer as the Creator of all had suffered. She would carry this cross as the Master had His — bravely, proudly. And this, from what has since occurred, obliges me to state that her desire was no mere boast.

All neurotics, however, are not in institutions for the insane. They mix with others on an ordinary basis, and it is generally after several months that they reveal their troubles to someone whom they deem worthy of their trust. As has been said, a two-way course is open to us. We may leave such people severely alone — or — we may strive to aid them.

To follow the first course is certainly not in accordance with heavenly mercy and love. That parable of the wounded man is a gauge to adjudge ourselves as worthy or unworthy of the neighbor's love and affection. The first to pass by the poor man was a priest. He, of all men, should have possessed a heart overflowing with good will toward others. But, no! Intolerance and hate had frozen the warmth which should have reigned supreme within him. Let another care for him. He would not. Is it not sufficient to know that the wounded man's condition is

none of my affairs? I have other matters to occupy my attention. But, poor specimen of a human being, let a question be put from the other side of the fence: Is not this wounded creature likewise a *man*? Of course he is. Then why allow inane prejudices to come between him and your bounden duty? You are an ambassador from on high! Does the Almighty shower His gifts only on the Jews and not on injured people of another race? Are the physically perfect supermen?

Too much education appears to be the nemesis not alone of our era but of many eras long since buried in dust. The priest had nourished the intellect and allowed the wells of the heart to become dry. On learned and abstruse subjects he could discourse fluently, but about those that bring tears to the eyes and contrition to the soul — about all-important matters he was ignorant. Small wonder that Christ excoriated the actions of such would-be leaders, for Christ knows that education is not a panacea to heal the evils which beset us. Nevertheless there is a cure for all our woes. It is a simple one too. The parable of the good Samaritan brings it poignantly home to us. In love for God and love for the neighbor we possess a complete answer.

Besides a priest who unheedingly passed by the stricken man, another traveler is mentioned, a levite. Now such a person was set aside to assist the priests in the care of the tabernacle and the various other matters connected with worship in the temple. We can take it for granted, therefore, that the two persons mentioned in the parable were both cultured and educated. But their uncharitable way of acting puts them in a class with the Scribes and the Pharisees. Against these our Divine Lord openly



cautioned His followers. "Beware of the Scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and love salutations in the marketplace, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts: who devour the houses of widows, feigning long prayer. These shall receive greater damnation."<sup>1</sup>

But, why, we ask, is their sentence heavier? The answer is easy to discover. Such persons are not alone uncharitable; they are hypocrites as well. And here is a sin the gentle Master excoriated in the strongest terms. "Whited sepulchers" — fair and beautiful without, but foul within. Christ detests hypocrisy because it is deception. The sinner who frankly and openly admits himself to be such is at least not perverting things. He is indeed what he appears to be. Not so with double-dealers. Truth Incarnate will not stand for falsehood masquerading as truth. And thus the Master has a way of bringing in the unthought-of person to perform His work.

The other evening we heard a war correspondent's story of a seriously wounded soldier who was left for dead among the stones and mud near Salerno. It thrilled one to the core. Suddenly the poor soldier was lifted ever so gently from the ground. Now he was awake. "Say, friend, you have two bad wounds yourself on your hands. Leave me here and you travel on. I'll manage somehow to get back." It was still dark and for many moments nothing was said. Then: "Those are old wounds. I've had them for hundreds and hundreds of years." When the soldier awoke, he was in a bed with more wounded men about him. "That was the tenderest voice I ever

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 20:46-47.

heard or ever expect to hear," he mused to himself. "I'll remember it as long as I live." Then he began to cry — but they were tears of contrition and of sweetness.

"I'll remember that voice as long as I live." The deep yet gentle tones of Jesus of Nazareth should remain with us too — always. Never should we forget them.

Those gentle tones of the Master become ominous and threatening however, when we give scandal. "And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of scandals!"<sup>2</sup>

The glory of the Church not only in America, but throughout the world, is her converts. We know of one zealous priest who received twenty-two neophytes into the fold last year. Thus quietly, yet steadily, the harvest is being reaped. But we who have been born in the faith have a solemn obligation toward these little ones, so dear to the heart of Christ. At all costs we should avoid scandalizing them. In their instructions, stress has been placed on the human angle in the Church. They have been told that inconstant human beings, not angels, rule over Christ's flock on earth.

Nevertheless, when they are frequently introduced to Catholics who, while affiliated openly with the Church on Sundays, spend the other remaining days in words and acts completely at variance with her teachings, a slow, sickening, spiritual paralysis ensues. Gone is that high idealism they first experienced on entering the Church.

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. 18:5-7.

Now they are just mediocre Catholics, or some perhaps will go farther and fall by the wayside of unbelief.

Will not our indictment at the judgment seat of God be a terrific one if we personally had part in the ruin of such souls?

### 3. GABRIEL THE CONSOLER

We have dwelt upon a few ways and means of daily carrying our crosses in a Christlike manner, because the Master has repeatedly urged us so to act.

Possibly the most difficult problem we have to conquer is — pain. Not all the preaching since time began will make it other than it is: a battle against superior odds — a conflict such as the boy David waged against the giant Goliath, a fight which proves whether we be cowards or heroes. Philosophers recognize its universality. “How lovely,” exclaims the untutored mind while gazing at a fragrant and perfectly formed rose. “How lovely,” repeats the botanist as he rapturously studies a similar flower. For joy is not restricted to any one group, or age, or clime.

Pain, too, has its wide appeal. Its curative powers are well known. Did not the Master prefer it even to joy? Indeed He did. Every man must have a flag to rally round; and the standard Christ chose was a red banderole — an oriflamme of blood, ignominy, and death. And in proportion to our faithfulness in following the Master we may expect an ever increasing number of vicissitudes, disappointments, and heartaches in our daily lives. As Christians, therefore, we must be prepared for pain. How shall we meet this friend, for such he is, when the door is opened to admit him? It all depends, kind reader, on



the grace of God and on the spiritual health of our soul.

To those who spend a few weeks in a hospital, the experience is not too heavy a burden. Rather do we look upon it as a new adventure. The room is filled with numerous bouquets as remembrances from loving friends. Tender hands faithfully administer to us. And when the time of departure arrives, there are usually tears of regret in one's eyes.

But when illness extends from month to month, and from year to year, the situation changes greatly. No longer is the room gay with flowers. Probably one is now in another room and in a sanatorium rather than in a city hospital. One has been segregated from society. He is a menace to the physical well-being of the community. Friends seldom visit him. He is surrounded by monotony. Here is his tryst with pain and lassitude. Shall he become a victim of monotony as the vast majority actually do, or shall he seek a happier escape? There really is a way of escaping dull uniformity and that is by loving monotony. Thomas à Kempis reminds us that, if a monk remains long enough in his cell, it invariably becomes pleasant and acceptable, like one's own home.

Our attitude toward suffering should be predicated upon the utter futility of striving to turn the world upside down without bringing God into the picture. An unreasoning, restless fly will try to break through a window because outside are luscious morsels to eat and a place to roam. An intelligent human being uses the obvious exit — the door. And if, perchance, he is gifted with an unusual amount of brain matter, he may wander down to the seashore and analyze his case from *A* to *Z*. He discovers at once that the ebb and flow of the tide

come to us in a monotone. A crushing nostalgic melody it is and — glorious too. For does not the sea purify everything it takes to its bosom? In like manner suffering acts. But pay we must for the victory.

It was only when Jacob was traveling in the desert and beset by enemies from many sides — it was only when his pillow was a stone and his bed the earth that God rewarded him by visits from angels, and he was consoled by a wondrous dream of a ladder, reaching from heaven to earth with heavenly spirits ascending and descending.

Many Fathers of the Church concur in the opinion that when Christ was in the Garden — in the desert of suffering — it was the Archangel Gabriel who was sent to console Him. Such sentiments of learned and pious men are all the more acceptable since Gabriel has always been known as the Archangel of the Incarnation.

In the Garden of Gethsemani, therefore, we find the answer as to how we are to overcome pain victoriously. Besides being God eternal, Christ was also man, with man's innate dislike for suffering and ignominy. And weary and alone, He goes to a secluded spot in the garden to pray. On the shoulders of the God-Man are carried the sins of the past, the present, and the future. Your iniquities and mine rest on His burdened shoulders. Those multitudinous unnatural crimes which horrify even the indifferent; those disheartening defections of people who for a time accept His teachings and then cast Him aside as did the Jews when they cried: "Away with this man and release to us Barabbas!"

In that awful agony Christ clearly perceived not alone the wickedness of worldly men and women; He was intimately aware of the faults, the disloyalties, and sins



of those whom He considered as friends and co-workers. Is it any wonder that, surrounded by an immense swarm of hatreds, of murders, of impurities, and of wars — is it at all strange that the God-Man should sweat blood and fear pain as we poor mortals detest and loathe it? We obviously know the answer to such a question. Should we foresee that — three weeks hence — our lives would be snuffed out in an automobile crash, our thoughts would center around the coming accident.

But Christ was not thinking of Himself. His main concern was about us; about our infidelities, our disloyalties, our denials. He was the scapegoat, driven forth with the moral filth of the entire world on His back. And yet — Christ prayed.

Here is the example which invalids should never try to avoid. Christ, a man among men (sin alone excepted); Christ, the innocent Lamb of God, welcomes pain even though, humanly speaking, He hates it infinitely more than we do.

In His torments in Gethsemani, the Master points out another danger invalids must contend against: melancholy. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here, and watch with me."<sup>3</sup> He, the God of heaven and earth, yearns for human comfort, seeks human companionship, yet this simple solace is denied Him. He is obliged to struggle on — alone. "And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none."<sup>4</sup>

Hence we discover that suffering is similar to death or taxes: we alone must pay the debt and — let us always

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<sup>3</sup> Matt. 26:38.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 68:21.



remember — debt it is. As the good thief put it when addressing his fellow robber: “Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil.”<sup>5</sup>

Such a thought should be frequent food for meditation on the part of those who suffer greatly and for years on end. Christ has singled us out both to satisfy for our own transgressions, and to co-operate with Him in redeeming the world through pain and ignominy. St. Paul gives us the same counsel. He reminds the early Christians, many of whom were Jews that just to be circumcised is not sufficient. If they are truly to follow Christ, then the whole law is to be fulfilled, especially in regard to following Christ in the bearing of His cross. And he ends that sublime exhortation to the Galatians by stating quietly: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them, and mercy, upon the Israel of God.”<sup>6</sup>

A young man comes to mind through association of ideas. His years as an exile have been so many that it is now difficult to count them. He remains, however, placid and cheerful despite his prolonged martyrdom. Across from the bed is a placard which he often contemplates. Some loving heart probably painted it and had it framed, then hung it on the wall for him to study.

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:40-41.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. 6:14-16.

It reads:

NEVER LET ON!  
NEVER GIVE UP!  
NEVER LET DOWN!

Day after day he puts those thoughts into action. With a quiet gracious smile he greets those who enter, whether it be a ministering nun to alleviate his ills, or an infrequent visitor. The former knows full well that maudlin sympathy retards rather than aids a sick person. But the latter apparently is unaware of this fact. And when a veritable volley of questions is fired at our friend as to how he feels, how much he eats, and how high is his temperature, a quizzical smile illuminates his countenance; and as dexterously as an expert duelist he parries the thrust and turns the conversation to other channels. Louder than any voice can carry, he tells us by deeds: *Never Let On.*

The second trench is even more difficult than the first, for it protects it from the enemy. For this reason one oftentimes catches him unaware, reading the New Testament. I purposely use the word "unaware," because the man abhors publicity and dislikes the notion that he is pious, or different from the other inmates. He is particularly interested in meditating on the passion and death of our Saviour. And it is from this golden treasury of thoughts that he captures the strength to carry his burden day by day. Opposite the bed hangs a large-size picture of the Way of the Cross. Daily, with crucifix in hand, he travels the *Via Dolorosa*. Almost every day he recites the Rosary of our Blessed Mother. But even when too weak to perform this latter devotion, Mary is nevertheless

not forgotten. Her fervent client repeats as many of the mysteries as his ebbing strength will allow. In a quiet unostentatious manner he fulfills the second pledge: *Never Give Up!*

The third wish of his heart is, *Never Let Down!* With a humorous twinkle in his eyes he will admit that his existence in the sanatorium is not unlike being father confessor at a boarding school. The patients come to him for a solution of their difficulties. When they do not knock on the door, he is satisfied that all is well. With quiet assurance he tells one of the pitfalls which melancholy creates among the sick. "Chronic invalids," he repeats, "are like elevators, now up and then — down. It is my task to keep them in good spirits."

"But how do you accomplish this superhuman feat?"

"Look out there. See those golden cloudlets reflecting the glory of the dying sun? They are as so many argosies with illuminated sails. Yet wait a few moments. The sun will then have set, and the cloudlets will quickly lose their sheen. Gray they are now and soon those magnificent ships of the sky will be swallowed up in darkness. Omar Khayyam once compared life to a hotel where one stays a night and then passes on to eternity. The Persian poet understood the truth. Compared to eternity, even the longest life is a matter of but a few seconds. And this — with some variations — is the record I play for my comrades in arms. It simply means that the tribulations of this life are as nothing when compared to the glory that is to come."

Christ, too, in the garden, saw clearly and distinctly the loyalties, the self-sacrifices, and the heroic virtues of those few who were to take His words literally and follow



closely in His footsteps. Doubtlessly, when the Archangel Gabriel presented that chalice of horrible suffering for the Saviour to drink, this thought inclined Him to endure all for us — this gave Him the strength to reply: "Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt."

We, as followers of the Crucified, must likewise gladly embrace humiliations, sufferings, and those frequent daily flotsam and jetsam which come our way and which prove conclusively whether we are moral cowards or gallant heroes.

May the great Archangel of the Incarnation help us show the world that we belong to Christ's chosen ones.

## Chapter IX

### THE NINE CHOIRS OF ANGELS

There is a word seldom used these days. We refer to hedonism. Yet to delve to the moral roots of modern unrest the philosophy connoted in this word must be analyzed carefully.

This word from the Greek signifies *pleasure*. The father of hedonism was Aristippus, a Greek philosopher, who lived about 435 B.C., and evolved the theory that anything giving one happiness was morally right; while actions contrary to a person's wishes were morally bad. He taught that the universal and ultimate object of striving is pleasure. Of course, such doctrines would be widely accepted. Removing all restraint, as they do, these theories likewise cloak with a judicial character actions which in themselves are intrinsically wrong. Aristippus himself speaks of higher forms of enjoyment — mental stimuli, domestic love, friendship, and moral contentment. But his followers — as invariably happens in movements of this kind — reduced the system to a plea for self-indulgence.

Epicurus succeeded Aristippus as leader of this school of thought; and though he tried to emphasize the superiority of social and intellectual pleasures over those of

the senses, the same yen for sensual gratification remained in his followers. The Roman poet Lucretius advances the idea of materialistic determinism in many of his poems. Naturally, as Roman society began to decay, the worst elements in the Philosophy of Epicurus were adopted. This went on to such an extent that today easy living and Epicureanism are considered as synonyms.

The materialists of today have this to their credit; while divorcing one another as caprice dictates; while placing film stars on pedestals and worshiping them as gods and goddesses; while indulging in unnatural sins which tend directly to destroy the family and the nation; while actively engaged in the frustration of justice in our courts — while committing these and a hundred other serious crimes, they have not had recourse — generally speaking — to an antiquated and false set of theories to justify their immoral conduct.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that the vast majority of human beings thinks in terms of phantasms rather than concepts. Some years ago a certain song was very much in vogue. On the radio and even at popular concerts one heard the lilting strains of "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles." Like most tunes that linger beyond a butterfly's life, it had something fundamentally sound which kept it before the public. It contained a humble confession of man's inability to fly skyward and there remain without extraneous aid. A pathetic little ballad it was, because it just accentuated the uselessness of blowing bubbles, except for pleasure, as children will do. When one milled over the words, he felt rather depressed. In plain, simple language, mankind was unable to soar. It was glued to earth as a fly is glued to sticky paper.



Now the author had no supernatural message to impart. He wrote of what he saw: that most men and women were like the bubbles — seldom going far from the ground. These creatures were of the earth, earthy. To be sure, children fly kites, but usually the kites become tangled on telephone wires, or the tops of trees. But there are exceptions. You and I have seen a kite soaring bravely in the blue and obeying perfectly a small wrist that manipulates it from the ground. This is just another way of declaring that materialism is but half of the scene and — a rather sordid spectacle to contemplate.

Some forty years ago a renegade priest wrote a vicious volume against the Jesuits. A British periodical evaluated the book in few words. It was the *Manchester Guardian*, if memory serves me correctly, that replied by saying, "Regardless of the truth or falsity of the charges, the Jesuit Order is the noblest effort the world has ever seen to raise men's minds from the things of time to the things of eternity."

It is therefore quite appropriate that a very unworthy son of St. Ignatius should strive to add his mite in accentuating spiritual values in a world where materialistic standards prevail.

### 1. ANGELS ARE POWERFUL

In an age where instincts of the flesh, for the most part, prevail, it is indeed wholesome and instructive to turn our thoughts to that invisible world about us where angelic spirits are ever on hand to protect those who fear God.

When the impetuous Peter drew his sword that night in the Garden of Gethsemani in order to defend the

Master, it was the Master Himself who rebuked him. He went, even further; He performed a miracle by restoring the unfortunate man's ear. The Saviour's words, however, stand out in importance above all else: "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?"<sup>1</sup>

Both here and in many other passages of Holy Scripture the potency of these pure spirits is brought to our attention. Probably the most terrifying example of this angelic power is seen in the case of King Sennacherib. Because of his military aggressions against the chosen people and because of his resistance against the Triune God, the Almighty quickly frustrated his military might by sending an angel — one angel, mark you! — "who cut off all the stout men and the warriors, and the captains of the army of the king of the Assyrians."<sup>2</sup>

But tremendous power is worse than chaos if not exercised in an orderly manner. In nature we recognize perfect synchronization. In the planets we perceive it likewise.

## 2. THE SERAPHIM

It is most natural, therefore, that a God who loves law and order should desire it to prevail perfectly in His own heavenly court. Hence, in the highest place, close to the dazzling and resplendant throne of the Triune God and the ever glorious Queen of heaven and earth, we find the Seraphim. They are the created representatives of the Almighty's divine fire of love. These incessantly sing

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 26:52-53.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Par. 32:21.

forth the praises of the Maker. "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of his glory."<sup>3</sup>

It was one of these creatures who flew to the aid of Isaias as he humbly bemoaned the fact that he was a sinner and a man of unclean lips. "And one of the Seraphims flew to me, and in his hand was a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs off the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: 'Behold this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed.'"<sup>4</sup>

Each day at holy Mass, before reading the Gospel, the priest begs that his iniquities be taken away and his lips cleansed as happened to Isaias. It is a beautiful prayer and should be recited frequently both by priest and laity. The Seraphim are close to the throne of the Most High. Their example of utter fealty and devotion to God is a cogent stimulus to our faltering steps.

On banners of the Crusaders waved the words: "God Wills It!" A grand slogan it was to lead Christians against aggressive infidels. In a similar manner those ardent Seraphim use the most potent weapon possible — prayer — to bring about our eternal salvation and to extend the reign of Christ on earth. The least we can do is to co-operate with them in placing our personal sanctification above everything else.

### 3. THE CHERUBIM

Cherubim in Hebrew is the masculine plural of a word meaning *to be near*. Hence familiars, personal servants, courtiers, bodyguards.

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<sup>3</sup> Isa. 6:3.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. 6:6-7.



In Exodus we read of how the figures of two cherubim, wrought of gold, were placed on the lid of the Ark, oftentimes called "the Mercy Seat." Solomon likewise placed in the Holy of Holies two huge cherubim, made of olivewood overlaid with gold. Just as Jehovah was on earth surrounded by figures of cherubim in His sanctuary, so, too, these loyal familiars surround Him in His heavenly court. These glorious creatures are filled with an immense amount of knowledge as Clement of Alexandria tells us.

The cherubim teach us today a much-needed lesson. So important is it that even various states of the Union have passed laws permitting religious teaching in public schools. Unfortunately, just to pass a law on so grave a matter is not sufficient, since school boards, actuated by bigotry and hate, quickly frustrate the purpose of the law by placing every conceivable obstacle toward its fulfillment. In the meantime, juvenile delinquency soars toward unprecedented heights. The trend toward religion in education is nevertheless clearly seen. Even an ignoramus perceives the folly of putting a razor blade in a baby's hand, and it requires no genius to glimpse the destructiveness of tampering with a creature's mind without any reference to the One who made it. An automobile is a success because it grows as the designer so desires it. Such procedure holds good for every insignificant gadget manufactured. Shall the intellect of man be the sole exception? Shall a child's soul, made to the image and likeness of God, be refused a knowledge of Him who created it?

Frequently and earnestly we shall pray to the cherubim that all mankind may come to a knowledge and love of the Almighty.

#### 4. THE THRONES

The pre-eminence of our Lord Jesus Christ is clearly stated in the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians wherein he affirms that He "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For in him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers: all things were created by him and in him. And he is before all, and by him all things endure."<sup>5</sup>

How heroically noble must these angelic spirits be! Created long before the Incarnation of the Son of Man, they gather with the utmost loyalty about the throne of God and His holy Mother. From intimate knowledge and love of correct procedure in the court of heaven they derive their title. If the Church has masters of ceremonies to direct and keep intact the numerous rituals she employs on earth, is it not reasonable to suppose that in the immense hierarchy of heaven there are pure spirits to engage in similar activities about the everlasting King's abode?

By their diverse activities the Thrones teach us a very important lesson. It is the lesson of the Psalmist who reminds us that from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Name of the Lord is worthy of praise. Always He should be the center of our thoughts, our actions, and our dreams.

#### 5. THE DOMINATIONS

It is worthy of note that St. Paul in his Epistle to the

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<sup>5</sup> Col. 1:15-17.



Ephesians reminds us again that Christ, as our Redeemer and our God, is naturally high above the angelic choir, equal to the Father in all things. St. Paul's idea is that we should strive to honor and glorify the Saviour in every possible manner because of His utter abasement for our salvation. Christ's Name is above all others because He humbled Himself for us even to death on a cross. It is the age-old refrain: He who humbles himself shall be exalted, and he who exalts himself shall be humbled.

When our Blessed Lord asked the blind man on the road to Jericho the wish dearest his heart, he said quite earnestly and devoutly: "Lord, that I may see!"

To see things perfectly should be our desideratum too. We are on earth for but one purpose: to save our immortal souls. The Dominations, by calling to our minds God's universal sovereignty over creatures both visible and invisible, accentuate our ultimate end.

In the present acceptation of the term, to dominate connotes a sinister meaning. It implies the use of force. Nothing could be farther from the truth where these celestial beings are concerned. With profound humility, yet indomitable strength, they go about their multifarious tasks. Though we have not been blessed like St. Paul to glimpse the glories of heaven, yet we know from the writings of the saints and the doctors of the Church that these celestial beings appoint and order what is to be done. As the correct use of the word implies, they rule that kingdom we banished children of Eve so ardently desire to see. Their zeal for the honor and glory of the King of kings is particularly commendable.



## 6. THE VIRTUES

The great Augustine, who wrote so frequently and so instructively of the angels, reminds us that: "it is very right that these blessed and immortal spirits, who inhabit celestial dwellings, and rejoice in the communications of their Creator's fullness, firm in His eternity, assured in His truth, holy by His grace, since they compassionately and tenderly regard us miserable mortals, and wish us to become immortal and happy, do not desire us to sacrifice to them, but to Him whose sacrifice they know to be in common with us. For we and they together are the one city of God to which it is said in the psalm, 'Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God,' the human part sojourning here below, the angelic aiding from above."

Augustine then proceeds to recount the numerous miracles which God condescended to perform, through the ministry of angels; and of the promises He made to those of good faith.

Because the Virtues are assigned to execute the orders which proceed from their superiors, the Dominations, it is not unlikely to infer that many an incident of heavenly intervention, revealed to us in Holy Scripture, was performed by one or more of these angelic beings.

From the derivation of the word, *virtue* means *strength*. And it is in this sense the question of the Master is explained when a sick woman touched His garment. "And immediately Jesus, knowing in himself the virtue that had proceeded from him, turning to the multitude, said: 'Who hath touched my garments?' " <sup>6</sup> Just

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<sup>6</sup> Mark 5:30.

as virtue to heal a sufferer of twelve years emanated from Jesus, so, too, strength is the characteristic of the Virtues. Therefore, when in dire need of spiritual aid to overcome our faults and sins, it is not at all beside the point to put ourselves under the protection of these pure spirits and invoke their salutary assistance.

## 7. THE POWERS

We gather much from the writings of St. Augustine. But this above all else: He is great because he is small in his own estimation. Particularly is the above true of Augustine's intellect. He seldom trusts in it, but puts his faith in the God of heaven and earth. Speaking on our favorite topic, he has this to say:

"And so it pleased God, the Creator and Governor of the universe that, since the whole body of the angels had not fallen into rebellion, the part of them which had fallen should remain in perdition eternally, and that the other part, which had in the rebellion remained steadfastly loyal, should rejoice in the sure and certain knowledge of their eternal happiness; but that, on the other hand, mankind, who constituted the remainder of intelligent creation, having perished without exception under sin, both original and actual, and the consequent punishments, should be in part restored, and should fill up the gap left which the rebellion and fall of the devils had left in the company of the angels." Of course, there is one exception in the entire human race, Mary, our Immaculate Mother.

"The great promise to the saints, that at the resurrection they shall be equal to the angels of God, being redeemed by the Son of God, should be a strong impetus for all



Christians. Thus the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all, the city of God, shall not be spoiled of any of the number of her citizens, shall perhaps reign over even a more abundant population."

From these words of the Bishop of Hippo and from the teachings of the Church, we now understand that nostalgic yearning in the hearts of all of us. Here we are exiles — far away from our real patria. But there — there we shall be completely at home in the Creator's everlasting domicile, filling the places left vacant by Lucifer and his rebellious legions. Ah, me! What happiness! What bliss beyond words!

Since one of the special duties of the Powers is to plan the campaign of the faithful angels against Satan and his cohorts of darkness, does it not behoove us wanderers in the mists of doubt and uncertainty — does it not seem logical to seek light and fortitude from them?

How profitable to the soul frequently to meditate on that exalted state which — please God! — shall one day be ours. When tempted to lead a mediocre or sinful life, what a salutary deterrent we have in those words of the Master. "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."<sup>7</sup>

If our status, therefore, in the life to come is to be equal to the angels, is it not logical for us to emulate these pure spirits here below in order to be found worthy of their friendship in the hereafter?

## 8. THE PRINCIPALITIES

The devastating flood of Bolshevism which inundated

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 20:36.



Russia almost a quarter of a century ago is gradually subsiding. But aftermaths of this terrific deluge are still noticeable. Russian peasants will quietly tell you of the millions slain; and the other millions wantonly allowed to die from starvation.

But the effects of this cataclysm are not confined to Russia. The entire world has felt its consequences. As we strive to analyze them, they reduce themselves into one main category: they tell us, as nothing before has so strongly revealed it, that all things are passing — that private property can be swept away, just as the lives of those who defended it were liquidated. The experiment of Russia, however, can never be justified either on moral or social grounds. Pope Leo XIII, about half a century ago, called attention to the sickness of the world — of how the riches of earth were in the hands of a few, instead of being distributed among many as they should be.

But the Russian upheaval is having salutary effects throughout the world. No longer are wise men putting their trust in the almighty dollar. Rather are they turning to the Almighty for aid and comfort.

Some months ago Barney Ross, a champion not only in the ring but in private life as well, told an audience that he was auctioneering the things he prized most dearly: the boxing gloves by which he gained his title. Besides serving gallantly in the South Pacific, Barney stated he was giving away the gloves that brought him fame and fortune in the ring in order to further interest in the war-bond effort. Said he: "After arduous months of fighting against the Japanese I have come to the conclusion that man needs little of earth's goods in a foxhole with death on every side."

This trend toward the spiritual — if it be lasting — should rest on spiritual values. The angels are not far away. Ever they are by our side, to be invoked, and, at all times, to be imitated. By invoking and imitating the angels we become — almost unconsciously — spiritual in thoughts, word, and actions.

### 9. THE ARCHANGELS

The great St. Thomas places the archangels between the principalities and the angels. He says that “the execution of the angelic ministrations consists in announcing divine things. Now, in the execution of any action there are beginners and leaders: as in singing, the precentors, and in war, generals and officers; this belongs to the principalities. There are others who simply accomplish what is to be done; and these are the angels. Others hold a middle place; and these are the archangels.”

Since St. Thomas speaks of singing in connection with the angels, it is not beside the mark to recall how frequently these angelic messengers sing as a preamble to some startling event: “And they cried one to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory.’ ” It is St. Luke who tells us, “So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.”<sup>8</sup> It is the great Archangel Raphael who concludes his mission to Tobias with these words of sage advice. “For when I was with you, I was there by the will of God: bless ye him and sing praises to him.”<sup>9</sup> We remember likewise how the three young men in the fiery furnace, after a visitation by an angel of

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 15:10.

<sup>9</sup> Tob. 12:18.



the Lord, began to sing a glorious canticle of praise to God. We recall the words of St. John in the Apocalypse, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients; and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction.'"<sup>10</sup>

All of us are familiar with the sublime paean of thanksgiving and of praise which resounded over the hills of Bethlehem on that early Christmas morn when the King of kings first appeared on earth. And so, by association of ideas, we look on these blessed spirits as full of courage and happiness for — does not the Lord love the cheerful giver? Naturally so.

Should we go further, and ponder over just why the angels are so happy, we discover the answer in their complete absorption in God and the things of God. They are happy and courageous; courageous and happy. The words are synonymous where there is question of the angels. Is not the same true of human beings likewise? Indeed it is. Who ever heard of a sinful person being happy? Or who ever saw a truly happy individual who was a coward? Happiness and courage come from our firm faith in the Maker of all.

In the Book of Daniel we learn just how to acquire this singing spirit; how to travel gayly and steadfastly through the ups and downs of life. This saintly young man was practically alone amid barbarous surroundings. Having humbled himself by fasting and penance, he alone of the vast concourse with him was permitted to witness the sight

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<sup>10</sup> Apoc. 5:11-12.



of an angel of God. But let us depict the scene in his own words.

“And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw it not: but an exceeding great terror fell upon them, and they fled away and hid themselves.

“And I being left alone saw this great vision: and there remained no strength in me, and the appearance of my countenance was changed in me, and I fainted away, and retained no strength. . . . And he [the angel] said to me: ‘Daniel, thou man of desires, understand the words that I speak to thee, and stand upright: for I am sent now to thee.’ And when he had said this word to me, I stood trembling. And he said to me: ‘Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, to afflict thyself in the sight of thy God, thy words have been heard: and I am come for thy words.’ ”<sup>11</sup>

By humiliations and self-imposed penances, therefore, we obtain from God these singular blessings. Like Daniel, we are able to walk upright before Him, even though armies of wrongdoers are against us. We fear nothing but the wrath of the Almighty. And being on God’s side, who is to withstand us?

It is very appropriate here to speak of Daniel’s vision, since the angel tells the prophet that “none is my helper in all these things, but Michael your prince.” Michael is also the guardian general of the Church of God.

### THE ANGELS

An acrobat who specializes in rope dancing or trapeze performances usually attracts both old and young at a circus. There is an element of danger as well as of skill

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<sup>11</sup> Dan. 10:7-12.

in the act. As he evokes approving cheers from the spectators, still more daring feats are achieved. At last comes the climax. The performer attempts an almost incredible feat. Usually he fails the first time and falls to earth. Below him, however, is a protective rope netting and he drops into it just to show the patrons how truly difficult the feature act really is. At the second effort the acrobat succeeds, amid wild acclamations from the spectators.

In writing on the angels, we have frequently thought of them as the protective netting which saves us from moral and physical death. Man is like the performer, strutting about on life's stage, and God, in His gracious pity, says to each of us, "Very well! As long as you remain in that perilous position filled with pride and pomposity, as long as you continue to expose yourself to temptation and the danger of falling, just so long will I be below to aid you."

But the simile stops far short of God's infinite solicitude toward us. We are most in need of God's protection when we think we need Him not. A man is never quite so unarmed as when he thinks himself to be armed. A saint is on the brink of hell when he considers that he is a saint. Under all circumstances, winter and summer, day and night — always the good God watches over us.

The increasing protection of the angels is one of the clearest indications we have of the value God puts on our immortal souls. St. Augustine puts this thought in a different way. "Wisdom must be thirsted after, righteousness must be thirsted after. With it we shall not be satisfied, with it we shall not be filled, save when this life shall have been ended and we shall have come to that



which God hath promised. For God hath promised equality with angels; and now the angels thirst not as we do, they hunger not as we do, but they have the fullness of truth, of light, of immortal wisdom. Therefore blessed they are and of so great blessedness, because they are in that City, the Heavenly Jerusalem, afar whence we are sojourning in a strange land, they observe us sojourners and they pity us, and by the command of the Lord they help us in order that to this common country sometime we may return and there with them sometime with the Lord's fountain of truth and eternity we may be filled."

Further on, in discussing the Psalms, the saint has this to say: "We love beauty; let us first choose confession, that beauty may follow. Again, there is one who loveth power and greatness; he wishes to be great as the angels are. There is power that, if the angels exert it to the full, it cannot be withstood. And every man desireth the power of the angels, but their righteousness every man loveth not. First love righteousness and power shall follow thee."

Here is the crux where devotion to the angels is concerned: we must strive earnestly for righteousness in order to become angelic.

When a person remarks that he has a right to a specific object, he means he has complete dominion over it. Others are obliged to respect this claim, this possession. A man who builds a house, or catches fish in the open sea, possesses these things as his very own. However, since faculties and qualities have been granted man not only for his own use but likewise to fulfill the wishes of the Creator in his regard, it follows that the Almighty should



be thought of under all circumstances. By the graciousness of the King of kings we have these temporal and spiritual gifts. He gives them to us; He may take them away whenever it suits His Divine Majesty.

The righteousness of the angels consists in their possession of God. Avidly, constantly, enthusiastically they endeavor to share with us the pearl of great price which they enjoy. Thus by their loving inspirations they strive to lead us to a more ardent, a more consistent union with the source of all goodness. Unfortunately, it is on this point we frequently disappoint these blessed spirits. Our thoughts, words, and actions are not in tune with God and the things of God. In many different ways we discover this to be true.

For example, many Catholics have the mistaken notion that their speech must be seasoned by curse words in order to produce proper effect. Psychologists explain that such individuals are merely trying to "show off." How different are they from the boy who was wheeled into the operating room of a hospital. The lad was suffering from cancer of the tongue. Gently the surgeon approached him while nurses and attendants stood silently by.

"I must tell you, my boy," said the surgeon, "that after this operation you will never again be able to speak. So if you have something to say, tell it to us now."

The boy's body became rigid for a moment or two. Then he recovered control of himself.

"I desire," he said as the entire staff grouped about him — "I desire my last words to be: 'Praise be to the Sacred Name of Jesus!'"

Now it was the surgeon's turn to become unnerved. A lump came in his throat. Never had a patient taught

a more salutary lesson. A lesson, indeed, we should all take to heart.

In America we have suffered from periodic spells of bigotry. But up to date we have never had any violent persecutions because of our belief. An old priest once told us that, just because God has spared us the rigors of such animosity, we should be doubly on our guard.

"On guard against what?" we asked.

"On guard against human respect," he replied.

From every church in the land we should shout such sage advice. Woefully in need of it are we. Why even during the sojourn of Christ on earth it was not difficult to discover this despicable vice. "Many of the chief men," says St. John, "also believed in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, that they might not be cast out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God."<sup>12</sup>

But the early Christians were tried by fire. They were confronted by a dilemma: either to offer incense to Jove or — suffer martyrdom. And the majority of them — thank God! — were true to their Maker. Lest a similar persecution sweep America, let us be forewarned and, consequently, forearmed.

If you happen some day to cross the Potomac and visit Washington's home at Mount Vernon, please study carefully his sword. On one side is engraved, *Recte facies*; on the other, *Neminen timeas*. There you have in brief Washington's philosophy of life. "Do right. Fear no one." Did not the Master teach us the same lesson? "And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But

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<sup>12</sup> John 12:42-43.



I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear him."<sup>13</sup>

That shibboleth of overambitious politicians which leads them to govern their actions by the standard of what people will think or say of them — that slogan is now the governing influence in the lives of a vast number of so-called Christians. They are more interested in obtaining and keeping the good will of men than the affection and love of the infinitely merciful God. What a state of affairs, indeed, when one leans upon a hollow reed rather than place his whole trust in the almighty power of God!

There is another discordant note which saddens the angels and the Creator of them. It is our repeated violations of God's day — Sunday. "Remember," He cautions us, "that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day."<sup>14</sup> We may learn many profitable lessons from our Canadian neighbors. The manner in which they observe Sunday is one of them. If a farmer works in the fields on Sunday, and there be no particular reason for his so acting, a mounted policeman takes that person to jail.

Of course, it may so happen that conditions there are not as they used to be. But a decade ago Sunday was scrupulously observed in the Dominion of Canada. The twentieth century, however, is not only a sinful age, but a sinlessly sinful one. Man, in his pride, has broken the laws of God so often that now he does not recognize bestiality, for he himself has become a beast.

There is a way of lifting ourselves up to a little less

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<sup>13</sup> Luke 12:4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Exod. 20:8.



than the angels, and this can be done by invoking the help of these celestial beings and by imitating them. We emulate them by cultivating humility of heart. Have you ever stopped to consider how many great sinners became tremendously great saints? It is a thought worth pondering. A sinner is filled with self-disgust. He realizes that there is a deep void in his heart. He understands, too, that of himself he can accomplish even less than nothing.

Then, as the flower turns instinctively toward the sun, he turns to Christ. Now he recalls that Christ has an infinite predilection for sinners.

And now — he is on his knees, sobbing out his woes to his Maker. And now — the angels of God rejoice in heaven. Another sinner has turned, like the good thief, to Christ.

## Chapter X

### MARY, QUEEN OF THE ANGELS

We are indebted to St. John for many sublime pictures about Jesus and His Blessed Mother but apparently the most perfectly executed one of them that we possess is that of the marriage feast at Cana. It is, in fact, designed in so masterly a fashion that we do not consider it in its true light. The old saying is here verified: "The highest art is to conceal art."

Nearness and clearness usually make the most uncommon things in the world common, ordinary. What more common in any village than a wedding day? Yet, what more glorious, more supremely wholesome, not alone to the two concerned but to the entire world, as marriage? From this solid foundation of matrimony stems all true progress. Man and woman concur with the Maker in propagating their own species, and in educating immortal souls for their everlasting abode in heaven.

We once knew a dear old missionary among the Flat-heads. He was quite conversant with this particular tribe's methods of expression and, week in week out, he would admonish them on the selfsame subject. "Remember, you are obliged to attend Mass on Sunday! Remember, you are obliged to attend Mass on Sunday!" We ventured to ask the priest just why he acted thus. His reply was sane — tremendously sane. "With these children of nature,"



he returned, "it is necessary to drive home, again and again, one important lesson before it sinks in and bears fruit."

Now we are all children of nature and, at the risk of being repetitious, is it not the highest wisdom to din into the ears of our hearers the all-important part which matrimony plays in the lives of mankind. The legions of Caesar quickly vanished when matrimony fell into contempt, and Romans took the easiest way out — divorce. Because of present conditions, the advocates of planned parenthood and other similar groups are ashamed to advocate openly their pernicious ideas as they boldly did before Pearl Harbor. But, hark ye! Hark ye! The same diabolical means are quietly used now on poor, ignorant Mexican women who are brought to county hospitals for confinement. Without knowing the import of what they sign, they place their signatures to a paper which spells doom for them as mothers.

Hark ye! Hark ye! Is it not as plain as the fingers on your hand that divorce and race suicide signify the decay, the disaster, and the death of America — the land we love? Why prate hypocritically "of the land of the free and the home of the brave" when we deliberately kill both freedom and bravery? It takes bravery to stand faithfully to a contract. It requires idealism and faith to regard matrimony as a sacrament of the Church.

The most deplorable phase of this disease in the United States is the ultrajudicious manner we use in speaking of it. We theorize, we deprecate, and condemn, but do we ever suggest anything positive and practical to stop its ravages? Seldom, if ever. Yet here is the most serious menace to the spread of the faith in America today. No

practical person will deny that a large number of Catholics are already a prey to this devastating virus. It is in our midst; daily it corrupts more and more. What is to be done about it?

The events which occurred at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee bear directly on the subject under discussion, and should be meditated upon most earnestly.

Let us begin at the beginning — with Christ, our Blessed Lord, who used every moment to advantage, who toiled laboriously during the day and spent His nights in prayer — our Blessed Lord felt it of supreme importance to be present at that scene of connubial happiness. And because He desired to show His and all succeeding generations just on which side of the fence He stood, the Master brought not one or three followers but “His disciples.” To accentuate further the solemnity of the occasion, He asks His own Blessed Mother to be present. And here — as we all know — the Saviour worked His first miracle at the urging of His Queen (as well as ours).

In this volume we have made little reference to the Mother of God, and this for the simple reason that the best should be kept until the last, as was the miraculous wine at Cana in Galilee. She is queen not only of earth but of heaven too. Her sway, like the reign of her Divine Son's, is a universal one. She rules in the domain of the spirit as well as over this material world. She is our queen as well as Queen of the Angels.

#### 1. HAIL, FULL OF GRACE!

Painters have emulated one with another in depicting that glorious tableau where the Archangel Gabriel bows



in humility before the most humble of God's creatures. "Hail, full of grace," he says. "The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women."<sup>1</sup>

We have here the first reason why Mary is Queen of the Angels, because she is full of grace. Mary's unique position as the bridge connecting earth with heaven stems from her Immaculate Conception. From the first moment that her stainless soul was infused into her spotless body, Mary belonged, her heart and soul, to God. Each second of existence in the womb of good St. Anne, each beat of her little heart, was an added outpouring of love toward the Creator.

It is beyond measure difficult to write anything of permanent worth about Mary, our peerless queen, for saints and doctors of the church have expatiated most learnedly and most interestingly on her prerogatives. And still — it would be downright cowardice not to endeavor to do so. It would be like a person's starting to recite the Rosary and then stopping it because — well, because the prayers are always the same. If such a line of procedure were followed, it would be logical to ban every old song just because it has been sung again and again. When a young man is in love with the girl of his choice, he tells her not once, but many times that he loves her, and, usually, he uses the selfsame words in doing so.

It was that gallant lover of Mary, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, who logically explained one reason for entering the Catholic Church: our attitude, namely, to the Mother of God. Only in the old Church is a man or boy allowed to become enthusiastic about the lovely maid of Nazareth,

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:28.



only in the old Church may one proudly and freely speak of his love and steadfast devotion to Mary, the Mother of God.

A lad of eighteen writes in a similar way from the South Pacific. He says that when the day's work is finished, he and nine other Catholic comrades gather in a secluded spot and there they kneel and recite the Rosary of our Blessed Lady. May we not confidently expect that our heavenly queen will shelter these courageous lads under her mantle of blue, as she did in the olden days at Genazzano and at Lepanto?

Then, too, we have a cohort of Catholic boys who fly the skies in planes. Knights of our Lady, they call themselves. Besides the duties which fall to their lot as air pilots, they strive always to conduct themselves as Christian gentlemen, and, more important still, to foster and propagate devotion to our Blessed Mother.

These incidents bring before us the need of unfurling aloft the banner of Mary Immaculate. We were present recently at a gathering where the old charge that Catholics give too much prominence to Mary was brought out for discussion. The man who answered the bigot replied in terms so gentle, yet so effective, that it may be well to report the conversation as nearly as memory serves us. After the first outburst of intolerance had taken place, our Lady's defender replied in calm even tones:

"I want you to go back, my friend, with me in spirit — back to the long ago, when we were boys together, possibly about eight or nine years of age. 'Member? Well, you were in a tight spot one evening. Instead of going home directly from school, the two of us sauntered down to the river for a swim AWOL. 'Member?"

"Yes," replied the other, "I recall that affair quite distinctly."

"Very good. Now when we two reached your home, did you go into your house and directly make known your disobedience to your father?"

"Heavens, no! You understand perfectly well what would have happened to me had I approached Dad. I would have experienced a good old-fashioned whipping."

"To whom then did you go?"

"To Mother, of course."

"And then she broke the news gently to your father, and persuaded him that the affair was nothing to get excited about, especially on a hot day."

"Precisely! But how did you know all this?"

"Because," rejoined my Catholic friend, "I asked your mother to do a like favor for me: to go next door and placate my father, too."

All signs of belligerency had now left the face of our truculent speaker. His countenance had assumed a mild gentle expression.

"My!" he sighed in a reminiscent way — "My! what a softening influence a mother has in the world!"

"That is just what I desired you to admit," returned our Catholic apologist. "And that is why the Church places Mary in a niche high above all others on earth."

How beautifully St. John envisages the Virgin as standing on a cloud between heaven and earth. Now clouds signify rain to nourish the thirsty earth. And as dew and rain are necessary for the growth of material things, so, too, is Mary our strength and hope when there is question of spiritual advancement. All heavenly gifts come to us through her — "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee."



Under no circumstances, therefore, should we allow criticisms against Mary. Possibly we may have to suffer discrimination and persecution but — please God! — our Lady's banner will always be carried high with gallantry and chivalry.

Consider a moment her glorious manifestations among the children of men. We can only high-light a few of them. Mary's benign influence is seen from the very dawn of Christianity. Long before the Virgin's apparition to St. Dominic, we discover holy men and women stringing disks or pebbles together in order to remind them of the number of "Aves" they should daily recite in honor of Mary. But Dominic gave impetus and new life to this devotion of the holy Rosary. Think of our Lady's part in the defeat of the infidels at Lepanto. Consider how the faith made little or no progress in Mexico until our Blessed Mother appeared to a simple neophyte, fifty-five years of age, Juan Diego by name. He was hurrying down Tepeyac hill to assist at Mass in Mexico City. It was on a day particularly dedicated to Mary, Saturday, December 9, 1531. The Virgin requested that a temple be built where she stood.

Juan strode off immediately to convey our Lady's wishes to Bishop Zumarraga. The good bishop, however, was not to be stampeded into any rash undertaking until he was convinced of the truth of Juan's words. He had Diego watched and cross-examined. Finally, Juan was told that he must ask this beautiful Lady for a sign to verify his request. But Juan had an old uncle Bernardino who was dying of fever. All Indian remedies failed to stop the illness. At daybreak on Tuesday, December 12, Juan struck out for St. James' convent to have a priest visit

his beloved uncle, Bernardino. Juan Diego wished to avoid the place of the apparition, so he took another road.

But the Mother of God was not to be denied.

“What road is this thou takest, son?” she tenderly reproached him. Then she reassured Juan about his uncle; the uncle was instantly cured. Juan Diego was very happy over this event, and immediately thought of the sign which the bishop had requested. At this meeting the Virgin called herself Holy Mary of Guadalupe. “Sign is it? Well go up to the rocks and gather roses.” Juan, though ignorant, was no fool. He knew that it was neither the time nor the place for roses. Nevertheless he went obediently to the rocks and found there in abundance luxuriant roses. Mexican Indians frequently wear a tilma — a long cloak or wrapper. Juan filled his tilma with roses and came back to our Lady. She graciously arranged them, and bade him keep them untouched and unseen till he reached the bishop.

As he unfolded his cloak the roses fell out. But what startled Juan more than anything else was that the bishop and his attendants knelt down before him. A life-sized figure of the Virgin Mother, just as Juan Diego had described her to the bishop, was glowing on the poor man’s tilma. This picture was guarded and lovingly venerated in the bishop’s chapel. Later, it was solemnly carried in procession to the preliminary shrine. In the renovated basilica a great mural decoration commemorates the episode.

But should such an important happening be considered as a mere episode? Certainly not. Mary, the Queen of Queens, had appeared to a simple God-fearing Indian



and — like an immense forest fire — the light of faith spread through every hamlet and village in Mexico. Study how Mexicans have endured persecution and even death for their spiritual heritage, and you have the answer in our Holy Mary of Guadalupe.

Or consider the apparitions of our Blessed Lady to the fourteen-year-old girl, Bernadette Soubirous, in 1858. Though Catholicism at this period flourished vigorously in certain sections of France, the cancer of materialism and atheism reigned in high places. Naturally speaking, there was great danger that France would be lost to the Church. Then our Blessed Mother appears on the scene. She chooses as instrument an innocent, humble girl. Again the same obstacles are encountered. Not only do the clergy frown upon these happenings in the hollow of the rock at Massabielle, but the civil authorities do all they can to prevent them. Finally our Lady wins — as is always the case. Bernadette's visions are pronounced authentic, and soon national pilgrimages are inaugurated. The incredulous are further confounded by the frequent occurrences of well-authenticated miracles that prove beyond a shadow of a doubt our Blessed Mother's power with God. Lourdes now belongs not only to France, but to the entire world.

## 2. THE WILL OF GOD

There is an incident in that sublime pageant of Lourdes, "The Song of Bernadette," which we poor mortals must never forget. Our Blessed Lady reminds Bernadette that, while others will be cured of their ills and lead a gay, carefree life, hers is to be one of sorrow.

Now is not this the very kind of existence Mary led on earth? She was innocence personified. Conceived without sin, she dedicated her life to obedience — wholly, entirely. From the very moment that *fiat* was uttered, Mary submitted herself in all things to the most holy will of God. She is the Queen of Angels in heaven because — because she was a queen, too, while on earth.

To one who was favored in so signal a manner, it may appear strange that she led such an ordinary existence here below. Choirs of Angels surrounded her at the birth of her Son. Angels advised her and St. Joseph at every crisis during those years of infancy; and yet, yet Mary always remains in the background. She is continually performing those humdrum acts which go to make up a happy family life. No inducements, however glamorous, alienated her from the most stupendous of all stupendous acts: the creating of a home for Jesus and Joseph. For thirty-three years Mary was — just a mother.

Just a mother! There is nothing higher than this lesson Mary bequeathes to us — nothing.

We remarked that we should carry high the banner of Mary. This can be accomplished by both words and actions, but especially by our actions.

What does our Blessed Lady think of those so-called mothers who, neglecting their first and foremost duties as guardians of their offspring, rush to the nearest factory in order to obtain employment and — easy money? Is this patriotism? It is simply misguided emotionalism. The Archbishop of Westminster, in his enthronement speech, spoke out bravely on the need of the restoration of Christian family life in these critical times of ours. Said he: "One of the most pressing needs of the Church and



country in this fair land of ours is the revival of Christian family life, which has suffered through the enforced absence of the father, through the removal of the children from the influence of their parents, and through the absence of the mother from her home during long periods of the day when she is in outside employment. The proper place for the mother with a young family is at home looking after her children, and the greatest possible contribution she can make to the nation, is the upbringing and the physical, moral, and spiritual education of her children. We cannot overemphasize this. A nation depends for its well-being on sound Christian family life, and therefore we should endeavor to remove all those obstacles that exist to the restoration of Christian family life. The divorce courts and the means to easier divorce are a menace to the stability of the family and the nation. The manufacture and sale of those mechanical devices which would prevent the procreation of children should be prohibited, and a strict censorship should be exercised on films and books which extol the evils that attack the sanctity of the marriage bond, and the sacredness of the family. For history has shown that the decline of a nation begins with the disintegration of the family.

“On the other hand, we should promote and encourage those projects which assist to restore family life in this country. We must get rid of the slums, and see that better and larger houses or flats are built for the families of the nation. Above all, we must create a sense of security in family life.”

To these words of the Catholic mouthpiece of England, we have a pronouncement from Doctor Warren S. Thompson of the Scripps Foundation for Population Re-

search: "There is no future for a nation if any considerable part of its people refuse to reproduce," remarks Dr. Thompson. And Mr. Herbert Hoover, the erstwhile President of the United States, asserts, "the moral life of the country is in danger." He urges women to take the lead in a fight to preserve decency both abroad and at home.

"We are fighting against a system that regiments man's very soul," says he, "a system which rears boys and girls to be cheats, liars, and worse." Mr. Hoover is perfectly right in appealing to women for aid in this terrible exigency; women have been leaders since the world began.

Let valiant women everywhere clean out, first of all, the governmental bureaus which allow gifts to destructive organizations to be deducted from income-tax returns. Our government, in other words, is giving substantial aid to men and women who refuse in marriage to propagate their own species. It places its approval upon them.

Second, let these women of good will hark back to the idealism and the heroism of Nazareth. A quiet, secluded cottage and workshop come at once to the imagination. Here work and prayer are synchronized perfectly, here example educates the Divine Child rather than words. Mothers and fathers of the twentieth century must grasp thoroughly the importance of example. Nothing is quite so strong as example. Hence there should be frequent meditation on the lives of Mary and Joseph. The simplicity, the gentleness of their ways on earth — these are lost horizons which we must endeavor to recapture.

Christianity lifted womanhood from slavery and degradation because Christianity meant Mary as well as Christ. The two are inseparable. We can imitate this glorious queen of ours. Yea, we must, otherwise defeatism, nihil-



ism, and — worst of all — the reign of Satan will prevail. Such a movement to restore the Christian home to its high eminence in society will not be accomplished in a week, or a month. It will require persistent — persevering — efforts.

We must start therefore with the old traditional concept of Christian family life and hand this down intact to our descendants. A correct understanding of the meaning of love must necessarily be advanced. Some eight years ago I read an interesting autobiography of a famous singer. She says in part:

“I have never been able to tolerate the idea of carrying on a career along with a marriage job. No woman can put her complete best energies into two works at once. One is bound to stand in second place to the other. We should never dream of arguing that a woman could be both an accountant and a surgeon. Of course not! Both jobs are too important to admit of divided energies. We argue about carrying on a career along with marriage, which is the greatest job of all! It does not seem logical.

“The first obligation of marriage is to be the worthy custodian of a home and a family. If a woman does this with the same whole-souled energy that an outside job demands, she cannot take on a second career. If she does, something is bound to suffer. Her home and her children will be left to the care of some hired outsider who cannot be expected to show more tender interest in them than does the housewife herself. Her husband will have, not a wife in the full beauty of the word, but a clubby kind of business associate who leaves home in the morning, meets him coming in at night, and is too full of her own problems to help him absorb the little shocks of his. In which

case he is decidedly drawing the short end of the stick. And this is a great mistake. Husbands deserve better than to be treated as second-class citizens!

"A certain amount of discipline is a necessary preparation for successful pulling together in any kind of work. I am thankful to have been reared in a wholesome regard of it! I have always loved singing better than anything else — I am told that I sang tunes before I could speak — and have always found it a hardship to give attention to anything but music. But when I was a pupil at the Georgian Court Convent, the nuns soon had me learning to sew, to cook, to make beds, whether I liked it or not. When I objected to lessons in chemistry and mathematics, begging to be allowed to practice, they told me with gentle firmness that I should need more than mere notes for my music and that everything I learned would make my singing richer and more vital. Even the hated chemistry and mathematics? Yes, even those! And I had to learn them. . . .

"A friend of mine had a new baby recently. I was happy to think of its coming, and spent a few free evenings making the child a little dress. When I carried it to my friend, she exclaimed over it.

" 'It's lovely! Just see those stitches. That dress came from Paris!'

" 'It did not,' I objected. 'I made it myself.' "

"She looked at me in surprise. 'That's more than I've done for the baby,' she said. 'I've bought everything ready-made and didn't have to sew a bit. Why, I stayed right on at work in the studio until a week before he came.'

"I cannot tell you the painful impression that made on me. I prefer to think of a studio's being run by people who



belong there, and a new little baby's being welcomed in an atmosphere of care and preparation and dreams.

"Frankly, too, I am sorry for the man in an arrangement of that kind. I know several young husbands who regularly telephone to their wife's places of business during the day, to see if she will be free in the evening. I know several who must make special appointments with their own wives, marking them down on the calendar! Yes, to me that is simply unnatural. Yes, I am sorry for the men — but I am sorrier still for the women. They are deliberately blinding themselves to their own best fulfillment. For reasons of vanity or ambition, they are sacrificing their womanhood."

So wrote Jessica Dragonette in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, for August, 1936. The world has become even more topsy-turvy since this article was written. But the everlasting verities of home life remain. Only a mother can create that most sacred of social units. Only a mother can keep it functioning in the proper manner. A nation and a world depend on a Christian mother.

Recently we watched with interest the story of "The Sullivans." That movie version of a stanch Catholic family will go a long way toward making people grasp the fundamentals of home life. There are joys there in abundance, and — as is to be expected — there are sorrows, too, in abundance. Somehow the picture recalled that long and arduous trek to Calvary which the Master undertook for each and every one of us. Mary accompanied Him in His sorrows as she, too, had shared in His joys.

There are two Stations that especially merit our consideration. The first is the meeting of our Saviour with His grief-stricken Mother. No words are passed between them. Yet, when all is told, what need is there of the

emptiness of words between two so closely bound together? The tortured Christ gazes in anguish at His tortured mother. Just a long silent look of understanding and of sympathy, then — then Christ moves slowly on. But some of the stamina He possessed before suddenly leaves Him. Power has gone out of the infinitely compassionate Saviour to sustain His own dear Mother. He is weak, unable to proceed farther. Despite their merciless floggings, the Roman soldiers admit the fact. He is too weak to go alone. It is not out of pity that they compel a man of Cyrene named Simon, to aid Him.

The other Station to which we refer occurs shortly before the crucifixion. Jesus makes one more superhuman effort to stand by His cross and talk. His speech is directed to a group of sympathetic women from Jerusalem. But what does He say? We have no knowledge of that sermon, except His words: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck."<sup>2</sup> Yet the sermon, very likely, dealt with their responsibility as mothers. Our Blessed Master was too weak for a long oration. Here was His last opportunity to address as such the leaders of men — women. Probably He told them just what we have been endeavoring to sear into readers' hearts in this and in other chapters. Angels sang when the Child clung to His Blessed Mother on that first Christmas night. The song that will turn this old weary earth of ours into a perpetual Christmastide is the "Holy Night" of a Child on its mother's knee. It is an angelic canticle without end

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 23:28-29.



for those heads of families who make it their main purpose to guard well their treasures, for those who never scandalize these little ones, since their angels always see the face of God in heaven.

### 3. OUR IMMACULATE QUEEN

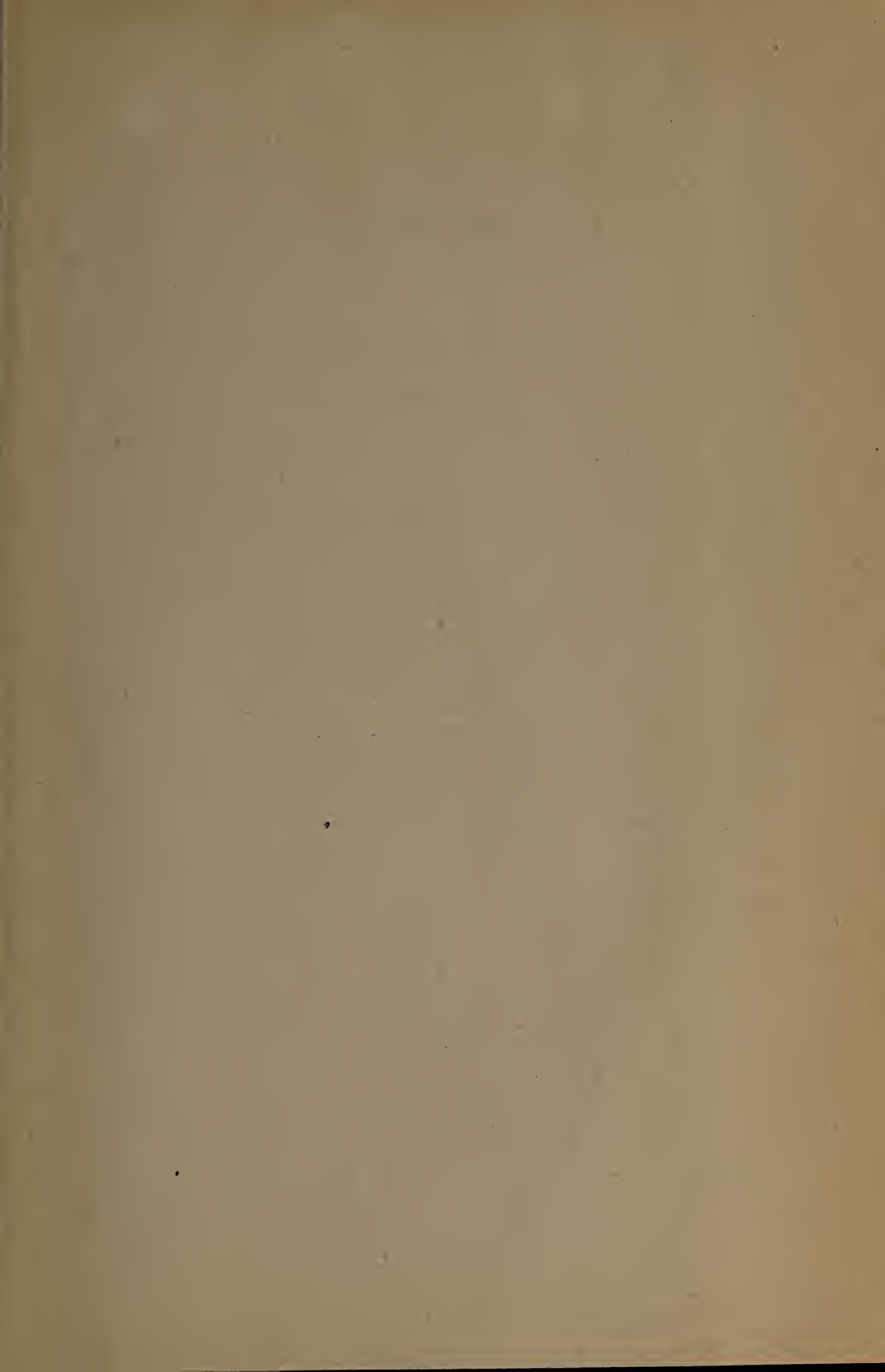
There is a beautiful story of a saintly mother who died peacefully in bed, surrounded by her loved ones. It was given to those in the room to see a group of angels accompanying the soul of the departed to the throne of God. But one angel came back, approached the corpse, and then reverently kissed it on the forehead.

"She never made us ashamed before the Almighty," were the words the angel uttered before departing.

Now our Lady, being conceived immaculate and being at all times faithful and true to the Creator was, at her death, escorted by her angelic subjects to the realms of bliss above. She who never did anything to make them ashamed while on earth, but rather performed her every action so as to elicit their profoundest admiration and respect — she is surrounded by angelic choirs who carry her stainless soul and her stainless body to meet her Divine Son; to assume her rightful place beside Him in that kingdom which shall flourish forever and ever.

What joy! What happiness do these blessed spirits experience in honoring her whom the King of kings honors! How dutifully do they acknowledge her as their everlasting queen! What intense love abounds as they realize that their queen is *home* at last.

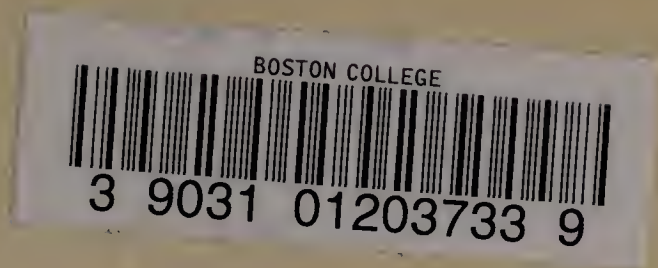
Yet Mary is our queen, too, powerful and ready to assist us in all our difficulties here below. Mary, Queen of Angels, be thou Queen of earth.







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